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General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

25th plenary meeting
Monday, 26 September 2011, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mompati S. Merafhe, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Mompati S. Merafhe, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mompati S. Merafhe, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Marafhe (Botswana): It is with infinite pleasure, Mr. President, that I join other speakers who preceded me in expressing our felicitations to you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We owe an immense debt of gratitude to your great country, the State of Qatar, for making you available to the service of the international community. We are confident that under your guidance and leadership the sixty-sixth session will achieve a successful outcome, one which will make a difference to the lives of multitudes of disadvantaged people around the world. May I also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, whose effective and exemplary stewardship of the sixty-fifth session earned our deep respect and admiration.

As the world's problems have in recent decades increased in numbers and complexity, so have the challenges and responsibilities of the United Nations Secretary-General, the head of our grand institution. I am pleased to note that the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, has acquitted himself extremely well, at times under very difficult circumstances. We specifically wish to commend him for his concerted efforts in raising the alarm on conflict situations and emerging threats to international peace and security. Allow me therefore to seize this opportunity to sincerely congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his well-deserved reappointment for a second term.

My delegation is of the conviction that all problems and challenges confronting humanity can be resolved within the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter and international law. In that connection, we must each do our part and work together to improve the lives of our people by conquering hunger, disease and illiteracy, to encourage respect for human rights and freedoms and to respond to natural disasters and different humanitarian situations.

Once again this year, the world has experienced a number of natural and man-made disasters, including violent, senseless attacks that have claimed numerous lives, left many homeless, caused massive destruction of property and caused intolerable pain and suffering.

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My delegation wishes to express our heartfelt condolences to all those countries that have been victims of those tragedies.

Our profound sympathies and heartfelt condolences go to the Government and people of Japan for the unfortunate Fukushima incident, triggered by a massive earthquake and subsequent tsunami that struck that country early this year. We also wish to convey our condolences and sympathies to the Government and people of Norway on the recent senseless and horrifying attack that left many people dead.

The humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa equally deserves our attention. We commend the United Nations for calling the attention of the international community to the plight of the victims of that disaster. We in Botswana have made our modest contribution to that relief effort. We express our sincere appreciation to the United Nations system and the international community as a whole for their generous and timely response to those tragedies.

At the inception of the United Nations, the international community pledged a solemn determination to safeguard succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In the intervening period, the world has seen monumental changes with profound effects on humanity. The end of colonialism and the cold war, the defeat of the inhuman system of apartheid, the institutionalization of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms around the world, as well as the strengthening of collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations in dealing with conflict situations, come to mind in this regard.

For decades the people of South Sudan have been engulfed in a seemingly endless bloody conflagration, accompanied by heavy loss of human life, destruction of property and condemnation to untold misery and suffering. However, we are delighted that the people of South Sudan, with the assistance and support of the international community, have realized their long-cherished dream. They now face a new dawn of freedom and nationhood. Allow me, therefore, to pay a fitting tribute to South Sudan on the assumption of her rightful place in the comity of nations as a sovereign and independent State and the 193rd Member of the United Nations.

South Sudan will obviously need the full support of the international community in addressing the plethora of challenges of nationhood, including outstanding issues from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement such as the future of the Abyei region, and other separation issues that could easily undermine this fragile transition. Botswana will endeavour, within the limit of her resources, to assist our brothers and sisters in South Sudan translate their political freedom into tangible social and economic benefits.

The evolving situation in Côte d'Ivoire is also a cause for optimism. While many security concerns remain, we believe President Ouattara and his Government have put in place the necessary measures to consolidate peace, build confidence, promote national reconciliation and set the country on the path to normalcy, reconstruction and sustainable development. We urge the international community to remain actively engaged in supporting this process.

While notable strides have been made towards resolving some conflicts, regrettably the same cannot be said of many other conflict situations, such as those in the Middle East, Somalia and Syria, where peace remains elusive, with attendant hardship and misery.

On Somalia, my delegation takes note of the conclusion of the recent Kampala Accord between the President of the Federal Transitional Government and the Speaker of Parliament, which is a welcome move towards improving the political situation in that country. However, we remain concerned about the deteriorating security situation and the growing humanitarian crisis in that country, and we call on all parties to remain engaged and to fully honour their obligations under that Accord.

Regarding the Middle East, Botswana shares the general frustration at the prolonged impasse in the situation in that region. We call on both the Palestinians and Israelis to remain engaged in the negotiations on the basis of a two-State solution, in which the two peoples will live side by side in peace and harmony.

There are other emerging threats to international peace and security. My delegation is deeply concerned about States that continue to violate with impunity their obligations under their constitutions and international law to protect their citizens from any armed conflict.

This very Organization is founded on the premise that Governments have the primary duty and responsibility to do all in their power to safeguard the

legitimate aspirations of their people for a better life, including ensuring their safety and security. It is therefore imperative that Governments provide an environment conducive to addressing the legitimate concerns and grievances of their people through inclusive dialogue and mutual understanding.

Consequently, it is not acceptable under any circumstances for any State to use military force against the civilian population — the very citizens it has sworn to protect. I believe we all agree that this is a clear violation of human rights and international law and an infringement of our common value system enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Our view is that any leader who sanctions such use of force on his people forfeits the legitimate right to be recognized as representing the interests of his people. The international community should therefore spare no effort in applying all the necessary measures at its disposal to protect civilians from such repressive Governments and to hold them accountable for their atrocities. In this regard, support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) is crucial for realizing the full implementation of the Rome Statute.

We commend the Security Council for its swift and resolute action on Libya under its resolution 1973 (2011), which authorized NATO to protect civilians in that country.

However, we remain concerned about the delay and procrastination on a number of situations in Syria. The Council's condemnation of human rights violations and the military assault on civilians by Syria came rather too late. It failed to convey a clear and unequivocal message of revulsion to the Syrian authorities and to urge them to respect international humanitarian law and human rights. Crimes against humanity have been committed in Syria, and the leadership in that country should answer for such crimes through the ICC.

It is important that the international community remain vigilant against any breach of international peace and security and also respond in a decisive, consistent and timely manner to any such instances. We find it unacceptable that such countries as mentioned can continue to belong to a community of peace-loving nations.

Botswana recognizes the National Transitional Council (NTC) in Libya as the interim Administration until there is an elected Government. We therefore welcome the NTC into the United Nations family to represent the Libyan people during this session.

The chosen theme for this session — the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes — is both timely and pertinent. It is timely, given the multiplicity of mediation efforts in which the international community is currently engaged as part of an effort to find a peaceful solution to the conflicts raging in various parts of the world. It is pertinent in that forging international peace and understanding is the raison d'être of this very body.

In order to maintain momentum in governance, my delegation believes that countries emerging from conflict should also commit themselves to the strict observance of human rights and national and international humanitarian law, as well as of the values of accountability and transparency, guided by effective application of the rule of law. In this respect, I wish to reiterate my country's support for all efforts geared towards assisting countries emerging from conflict to make successful transitions to post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and economic recovery.

Allow me now to turn to another critical pillar of the United Nations mandate, namely, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. Now more than ever, our global citizenry is demanding practical actions to address the global challenges we face. They believe — and rightly so — that collectively we are equipped with enough resources, institutions, policies and lessons learned to respond effectively to existing and emerging global challenges. They therefore expect us to muster the requisite political will to find durable solutions to those challenges.

For them, it is no longer acceptable for children to die from HIV and AIDS or any other preventable disease just because the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights hinders access to affordable treatment. They do not accept that over 113 million children have no access to primary education. It is certainly no longer acceptable for people to die from cholera and other waterborne diseases when affordable technology for clean water and sanitation exists. Nor is it acceptable for our people to continue to be exposed to the dire consequences of climate change, while we debate endlessly instead of concluding a comprehensive,

legally binding climate change regime to curb global warming and its effects.

In other words, our people want us to do more with the collective resources that we have at our disposal.

The residual effects of the financial and economic crisis, coupled with ongoing uncertainties in the global economy and the prevailing high cost of energy and food, have compounded the setbacks experienced in the implementation of internationally agreed goals and commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals. We must ensure that sustainable development in all its three pillars — social, economic and environmental — remains the key framework for attaining a balanced approach towards development in our countries. In that context, poverty eradication should remain the centrepiece of all our policies and programmes.

As we prepare for a common global policy on sustainable development in Brazil in June of next year, we are increasingly concerned about the negative trend the negotiations are taking. The ongoing climate change negotiations, the failed nineteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the ongoing discussions on the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development continue to expose deep divisions among our countries. Unfortunately, those divisions undermine the implementation of existing commitments and threaten prospects for an effective global sustainable development regime. We believe that the Rio+20 processes present an excellent platform for all Member States, individually and collectively, to muster their resolve towards the attainment of sustainable development.

Similarly, the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in South Africa later this year, offers the international community yet another valuable opportunity to reverse the harmful effects of climate change on our planet. We must forge a spirit of cooperation and partnership, including through South-South cooperation, public-private partnerships, resource mobilization and technology transfer, as well as capacity-building, to assist countries such as my own to exploit the abundant coal reserves for sustainable energy production in a manner less harmful to the environment.

Significant progress was made in that respect last September, when we resolved to take effective measures to further strengthen support for and meet the special needs of regions and countries struggling to achieve economic and social development, including middle-income countries. Recent experience has shown that even that category of countries, which have made small gains in poverty reduction, are still vulnerable in the event of further global economic and financial upheaval.

The limitations imposed by our fragile economy and the landlocked position of my country, Botswana, also call for the speedy implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, accompanied by renewed efforts to level the playing field in international trade. We must muster the political will to conclude the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization trade negotiations as soon as possible.

We as nations, individually and collectively, face the greatest challenge of our time — the uplifting of humankind. In fulfilling that mammoth task, our greatest hope lies in our ability as leaders to summon our courage and political will to do what is right.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to working with other Members in our common endeavour to put our Organization at the service of humanity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mompati S. Merafhe, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Waheed,

Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Waheed (Maldives): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to join previous speakers in congratulating you warmly on your assumption of office to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. Your election is testimony to the growing confidence of the international community in the ability and commitment of the smaller Members of this Organization to play an increasingly active and responsible role in the United Nations. I would also like to take this opportunity to place on record our deep and abiding appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for the exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the sixty-fifth session.

Allow me also to convey my sincere felicitations to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his re-election for a second term. We remain confident that his experience and leadership will ensure that this Organization, in which so many of our hopes and dreams are invested, will be equal to the many complex challenges facing us during these tumultuous times.

We are at a defining moment in history. Across the Middle East and North Africa, popular pro-democracy uprisings are sweeping away longstanding dictatorships. We are witnessing the greatest liberation movement since the fall of the Berlin Wall. But what is most striking is that it is happening in countries with predominantly Muslim populations. The democratic uprisings across the Middle East prove that Muslims yearn for democratic rights just as much as non-Muslims.

For me, that is not surprising. After all, we are all human. We all feel resentment if those in power steal our county's wealth. We all feel frustrated if we are prevented from speaking our minds.

In the fog and confusion of the turmoil we are witnessing in the Middle East, one thing stands abundantly clear. The demand for human rights and democratic values is universal. The march of democracy is inevitable. And the argument that says Islam and democracy cannot be united is shown to be foolish and patronizing.

My country, the Maldives, in some ways was a harbinger of the Arab awakening. Our revolution began eight years ago. Then, in 2008, presidential elections brought peaceful closure to a 30-year authoritarian regime. Since then, we have had our difficulties consolidating democracy. There are many hurdles to overcome.

But I am pleased to report that in the three years since the elections Maldives is generally stable, safe and successful. I do not want to sound complacent. Democracy is a process, not an end goal. Freedoms are always threatened in one way or the other. A successful democracy requires more than just the separation of powers. We also need free media, strong institutions and a vibrant civil society. Above all, we need patience to realize the fruits that democracy brings.

Nevertheless, I can report without exaggeration that Maldives enjoys more freedoms today than at any other point in our history. I am sure that, with the support of the United Nations, the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other countries will also enjoy democratic freedoms.

We must counter the false perception that people must choose between devotion to Islam on the one hand, and the full enjoyment of human rights on the other. We strongly believe in the compatibility of Islam and human rights and seek to do our part to promote understanding and tolerance. That is why we intend to organize, during 2012, a major international conference on progressive Islamic jurisprudence and human rights. With this conference, we hope to renew the concepts of peace and tolerance, coexistence and inter-faith harmony in Islam.

As we watch the changes in the Middle East and North Africa, it has become even more imperative that the question of Palestine be addressed. The Maldives stands shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinian people. The time for Palestine to join the international family of nations is long overdue. We therefore welcome its application for statehood. The Maldives calls on all Members to support the recognition of a Palestinian State, living side by side and at peace with the State of Israel. While recognizing the rights of the Palestinians, we also value and support the right of the people of Israel to live in peace and security.

We are proud to announce that last week Maldives acceded to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Maldives believes that human rights must be protected at the national and international levels alike. We are pleased to join a growing alliance of States that stand firmly against

those who believe they can violate human rights with impunity. In our globalized world, those who trample human rights or deny basic freedoms will be held accountable. I am proud that the Maldives has now taken its rightful place as a defender of international law and human rights.

As a small island State, we understand that our means are modest. Nevertheless, we are proud to contribute to United Nations efforts to promote peace and security. In this regard, we are pleased to note that following the approval of our Parliament, the Maldives is looking forward to becoming engaged for the first time in United Nations peacekeeping efforts around the world.

As a newly graduated least developed country (LDC), we welcome the international support we have received in our transition. Our graduation from LDC to middle-income status has not been easy. Based on our experience, I would like to say that the international community must continue to help States make a smooth transition from LDC status. We must not allow graduation from LDC status, and the removal of support that comes with it, to undermine a country's progress and development.

The Maldives has spared no effort in highlighting the growing threats posed by climate change. Our nation is just one and a half metres above sea level. For us, climate change is no vague or abstract menace, but a clear and present danger to our very existence as a nation-State. Over the past year, the world has experienced an increase in natural and man-made disasters, which compels us to address the effects of climate change with more resolutely and urgently. It is becoming increasingly evident that the international community needs to be better prepared and equipped to address the challenges of disaster preparedness and response.

Cutting global carbon dioxide emissions to a safer level — below 350 parts per million — is not just an environmental issue. It is also an issue of national security. We view the cutting of carbon emissions not as a burden but rather as an opportunity — an opportunity not just to protect the climate, but also to create new jobs and grow our economies. For these reasons, Maldives is proud to announce that we will dedicate a minimum of 2 per cent of our total Government revenue to investments in renewable energy.

We look forward to the day when the international community will adopt a legally binding climate treaty. We welcome the incorporation of the political pledges contained in the Copenhagen Accord into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process in Cancún. In Durban, we look forward to helping to advance the process so that we can reach the elusive prize of an agreement that protects the climate and the interests of vulnerable nation-States.

From the very beginning, the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS) has been inextricably linked to the Rio process. Unfortunately, the objectives defined in the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy have, like the goals expressed in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, gone largely unmet.

Now, as we set the goals of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, we must include in the agenda a serious review of the progress made by the international community in addressing the sustainable development challenges facing small island developing States. The Maldives hopes that Rio 2012 will provide a platform and create the necessary impetus to radically reform international support for SIDS. This should pave the way for establishing a SIDS category based on objective, transparent and consistent criteria.

We must also analyse and identify the particular challenges and needs of SIDS, which are different from those of other developing countries. We must further ensure that United Nations programmes are redesigned to assist with those particular challenges. Maldives believes that three issues should form some of the key pillars to be discussed and acted upon in Rio next year. They are, first, the reform of United Nations support for the sustainable development of SIDS, secondly, a political declaration and strategy to give impetus to the roll-out and mobilization of renewable energy and green technologies, and lastly, improvements in the integration of sustainable development principles into international and domestic policy at strategic and project levels alike.

We are deeply concerned by the dire food crisis in the Horn of Africa. As the United Nations, we must come together to find global solutions to these challenges and ensure that we work to protect the

rights of those who are most vulnerable, especially women and children.

As a country that derives its livelihood from the ocean, we are also concerned by the growing threat of piracy in the Indian Ocean. We will continue to work with the international community in addressing this growing menace so as to make our maritime areas safe for international shipping and trade.

The Maldives looks forward to a time when every country will be democratic, every nation will be free and the values that underpin this great institution can finally be realized everywhere. Through the institutions of the United Nations, we look forward to continuing to promote equity, fairness and the protection of the most vulnerable, regardless of where they live or what religion they practise.

Only through the United Nations can we hope to forge an agreement that protects our climate — a prerequisite for all of our future progress and development. In this volatile and ever-changing world, there is one institution that provides the stability of continuity, and that is the United Nations. The United Nations is more important today than ever before.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohamed Waheed, Vice-President of the Republic of Maldives, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Joseph Boakai, Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mr. Joseph Boakai, Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph Boakai, Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Boakai (Liberia): Liberia congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election to the important office of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We are confident that you will steer the work of this session in a manner which brings pride to your great country, the State of Qatar. Mr. President, we wish you well and pledge Liberia's full support to you in pursuit of the priorities which you have identified.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Joseph Deiss of Switzerland, for the effective manner in which he conducted the affairs of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session. His sound and outstanding leadership enabled the session to register many achievements.

We warmly congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his unanimous re-election, and extend the highest commendation to him for his vision and foresight, and for the tireless efforts with which he continues to administer the Organization. We embrace the priorities which he has set for his second term, which are centred on sustainable development.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome and congratulate the Republic of South Sudan upon its admission as the 193rd Member of the United Nations and to assure it of Liberia's friendship, support and solidarity.

The theme chosen for this year's general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", could not have been selected at a more opportune time. Communities within our world continue to be polarized by conflicts which have their roots in political marginalization and socio-economic inequities. Despite global interdependence, inter-State relations are still constrained by divergent ideological convictions and structural inequalities in the global economic system. These have resulted in divisions which undermine our efforts to move as one global community towards sustainable development.

Mediation, as part of preventive diplomacy, is indeed a powerful dispute-resolution mechanism. The United Nations has a central role in promoting mediation in pursuit of peace. The good offices of the Secretary-General remain critical to the mediation efforts of the United Nations. Regional and subregional organizations are assuming an increasingly active and complementary role in mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These initiatives must not only be acknowledged and encouraged but also supported by the global community.

As a post-conflict country, Liberia has benefited immensely from numerous mediation efforts that include national, regional and international initiatives aimed at restoring and maintaining stability in the country. Our experience leads us to suggest that greater emphasis be placed on preventive measures, and that the tools of mediation be employed as soon as early warning signs of conflict emerge. The benefits of establishing an early-warning system that will deal with potentially explosive situations before they degenerate into full-blown infernos are obvious.

It has been nearly a decade since this body and friendly nations intervened to restore Liberia to normalcy. That intervention ended a disastrous 14-year civil war and created conditions for the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the establishment of a transitional Government and the democratic election of Africa's first female President.

Consistent with our commitment to national recovery and post-war reconstruction, we have developed programmes and policies specifically aimed at lifting Liberians to higher levels of productivity, reviving basic services, restoring infrastructure and re-establishing the rule of law. Overall, we are making progress on all of these fronts and building a more inclusive society in which the full potential of all of our citizens can be harnessed.

In this endeavour, special emphasis has been placed on the empowerment of women and their participation in all aspects of the national endeavour. A well-crafted gender policy is enabling the Government to address the concerns of women and girls. We consider the creation of the gender entity UN-Women to be an important positive development in the context of the United Nations effort to promote women's empowerment. Liberia pledges its fullest support for the success of this important body.

Cognizant that youths constitute the highest percentage of our population, we are committed to developing programmes that will strengthen and empower them for future leadership. We hope that the action plan adopted by the recent United Nations High-level Meeting on Youth will garner international support for our youth programmes.

We are continuing to progress in our efforts to reform our security sector. Special attention is focused on building the capacity of the Liberian National Police. However, we remain deeply concerned about events affecting security in the Mano River Basin. That is why we are thankful to the Security Council for extending the mandate of UNMIL.

Liberia is pleased to have been placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). The Liberia configuration of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Support Office have worked with the Liberian Government and other stakeholders in developing the Liberia priority plan, which focuses on security-sector reform, strengthening the rule of law and accelerating national reconciliation.

I would like at this juncture to thank His Excellency Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan and Chairman of the Liberia configuration, and the configuration's members for their commitment and dedication. In the same spirit, I also commend His Excellency Mr. Eugène-Richard Gasana, Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission, and its members for their support for the configuration.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the significant role being played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the maintenance of peace and security in the subregion. ECOWAS member States are contributing tangibly to peacebuilding in Liberia by strengthening capacity, especially in the technical area. We are also collaborating as a subregion in addressing the common problems of transnational organized crime, human and drug trafficking, and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Liberia is poised to conduct another democratic election on 11 October. It will test our commitment to democratic governance and peaceful coexistence. Every action is being taken to ensure that the elections are free, fair, transparent and credible. We invite the international community to observe and monitor these elections.

Despite the significant gains made in improving the living conditions of our people, we realize that far more needs to be done to fully meet their aspirations. However, negative economic forces continue to hamper global growth. This situation has had repercussions for all countries. Although the resulting effects have impacted developing countries generally, those most affected are in Africa, where the crippling effects of external debt, deteriorating terms of trade, decline in investment and capital flows are debilitating.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Post-conflict countries are even more severely affected. This is why we have particular appreciation for the outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) convened in Istanbul in May. We hope that the Istanbul Programme of Action will bring real change for LDCs.

Food security remains a concern for many developing countries. The World Bank estimates that 44 million people have slipped into poverty since June because of rising food prices. This unfortunate situation should be addressed with urgency. We must act now, effectively and cooperatively, to roll back the adverse impacts of rising food prices and protect communities.

Our Government is responding to the current rise in food prices with immediate action under the policy Ending Hunger in Liberia, which aims to strengthen the entire agricultural food chain from securing quality seeds for farming in productive lowlands to connecting farmers to local markets and eventually to regional and global ones. Simultaneously, we are deepening our partnership with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and other United Nations bodies for long-term investments in mechanized agriculture to achieve food security in Liberia.

While we seek food security, we are equally mindful of the need for health security. Liberia is among countries with the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world. This is due primarily to the lack of skilled health workers, poor health delivery systems and inadequate medicines and supplies. This is why we welcome the new initiative of the Secretary-General aimed at improving the health of women and children.

I wish to state my country's position on some of the prevailing situations that threaten peace, security and international cooperation in our world. The unresolved riddle in Somalia presents a strong challenge to the United Nations in relieving the Somali people of the tragedy and cruelty they have endured for many years. The phenomenon of famine has exacerbated the situation in that country and affected livelihoods in the Horn and East Africa. Those circumstances necessitate an urgent call for action.

The question of peace in the Middle East has hovered over the world for far too long. Liberia believes that whether deliberations take place in the Security Council or the General Assembly, dialogue between the parties remains the most viable option for ending the stalemate towards an independent Palestine. We therefore call on Israel and Palestine to demonstrate a concrete commitment to engaging each other in a constructive dialogue that will achieve the desired two-State solution.

Suppressive actions by Governments to frustrate the desire of their people for democratic reforms must never be condoned because they undermine international peace and security. Coherent and concrete actions by the Security Council are critical in addressing those situations. Liberia welcomes the new leadership of Libya under the National Transitional Council (NTC). After more than four decades of suppression, the Libyan people have high expectations for the restoration of their freedom and liberties. We encourage the NTC to move quickly to restore Libya to normalcy by establishing an inclusive transitional Government that will organize democratic elections.

As the United Nations grows in membership and experience, Liberia joins other nations in calling for a more democratic Security Council that reflects realities of the twenty-first century. Africa expects to have greater representation in a reformed Security Council. More broadly, we encourage the Secretary-General's continuing effort to modernize the organization.

Finally, it is my hope that Member States will work together to advance the cause of our common humanity, and make the world a better place in which to live.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Boakai, Vice-President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Danilo Astori, Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Danilo Astori, Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Danilo Astori, Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Astori (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I come to speak before the Assembly representing a country that is celebrating the two-hundredth anniversary of the endeavour that led to its birth as an independent and sovereign State, and that has preserved its aspiration to continue offering the international community its long-standing tradition of respect for the principles of international law and its ongoing commitment to the cause of peace and peaceful coexistence among nations.

Uruguay takes pride in its calling to serve the international community in promoting dialogue, understanding and the tireless search for consensus as the most appropriate ways for interaction among its members. It was through the application of those principles that we recognized and welcomed this year the 193rd Member of this Organization, the Republic of South Sudan.

Likewise, in March we recognized the State of Palestine. We believe that all of the necessary conditions have been met for this recognition to become universal and for the realization of a two-State solution, which Uruguay has supported since 1947, as well as for a path that reaffirms the right of Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace, within secure and recognized borders, in a environment of renewed cooperation and free from any threats or actions that could jeopardize peace.

The Palestinian people have a legitimate and full right to statehood. But the Jewish people also have the undeniable right to live in peace in a safe country, free of terrorist attacks — attacks that Uruguay has always rejected and condemned.

Uruguay is proud to have made a decisive contribution to the creation of the State of Israel, whose hard-working people have lived up to the historic vision of the men and women who made its creation possible. We are convinced also that the time has come for the Palestinian people to show the world their decisive contribution to peace, development and international cooperation.

Once again, in keeping with our adherence to international law, we cannot but express our utmost rejection of coercive measures that violate the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, such as the economic, trade and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba — a unilateral measure that contravenes not only the Charter but also international law as well as one of the most important principles of my country's foreign policy, namely, the peaceful settlement of disputes.

We reject all manner of violence and all threat or use of illegal force, including terrorism — an unjust and unjustified crime, a cruel scourge that 10 years ago most painfully affected New York City. We express our condolences and solidarity to the victims' families and the American people, as well as our desire and commitment to ensure that these kinds of acts never happen again, here or anywhere else.

While we are guided by the principles of international law, the promotion and protection of human rights and international humanitarian law also figure among the priorities of Uruguayan foreign policy. This a reflection of the country's political and institutional heritage, that of deep-seated democracy and the solid rule of law.

Allow me to express in that respect my gratitude in connection with the honour conferred on us when Uruguay was elected to chair the Human Rights Council. We will strive to honour this vote of confidence by working every day to strengthen the multilateral system for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Uruguay has an outstanding record in this area, not only because it is one of the countries that has signed the widest array of conventions, but also because it has made specific contributions in diverse fields, including the defence of the rights of the child; the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all United Nations system policies and programmes, as reflected in the establishment and implementation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and the promotion of fundamental freedoms, including, inter alia, freedom of expression.

During the course of its mandate, our country intends to promote a new culture of dialogue on human rights — a culture that favours the cooperation of countries with the system, but also of the system with those countries that need assistance to improve their internal human rights situation. We would also like to enhance the Council's working methods and promote the implementation of its instruments in a non-selective manner, avoiding double standards. We would also like to strengthen the role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as a key element of promotion and protection mechanisms, by providing the resources necessary so that it can effectively discharge the mandates that Member States are increasingly assigning to it.

Uruguay is not indifferent to situations of armed conflict. That is why we have made tremendous efforts in that respect and will continue to do so in order to maintain and strengthen the applicable norms of international humanitarian law.

In keeping with this, we believe that we cannot ignore mass atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Bearing in mind at all times the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States — a principle that our country and region holds dear — we recognize the State's primary responsibility to protect its population, as well as the importance of fostering cooperation with States that might require international assistance to fulfil that obligation. The aim is not to weaken their sovereignty but, rather, to strengthen it.

A few months ago, we welcomed the Secretary-General to our country, and we congratulated him once again on his re-election, which Uruguay enthusiastically supported from the outset. Mr. Ban Ki-moon expressed the recognition of the international community of one of the most relevant aspects of our foreign policy over the past several decades: our unwavering and committed participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. With approximately 30 per cent of its operational defence forces devoted to these operations, Uruguay is the main troop contributor as a proportion of its population and ranks 10th in absolute terms. Uruguay thus places at the disposal of the United Nations valuable human and material resources in the context of work that is the flagship of this Organization, deploying in situations and discharging mandates of increasingly complexity.

Given the complexity of current international affairs, together we have begun an in-depth discussion of the United Nations peacekeeping system. We are convinced that these missions will be sustainable only if we seriously reconsider the resources needed for their proper functioning and update the conditions offered by the system so as to ensure that the United Nations is supplied with both equipment and human resources.

Today peacekeeping operations are the most important and visible aspect of United Nations missions and the one that most exposes the United Nations to international scrutiny, often positive but sometimes negative.

Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to peacekeeping operations and to the strictest enforcement of the mandates and standards regulating the conduct of field personnel. That is why, in cases of shameful and unacceptable misconduct — such as that perpetrated by five members of our military deployed in Haiti, where since the beginning of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti we have contributed tens of thousands of men and women, some of whom have offered their lives to help that brother country consolidate peace and stability — we have not hesitated to act with the utmost severity and rigor as the circumstances demanded. Under my country's military justice, those five individuals accused of military crimes have now been sentenced to prison and the case has been referred to the civil justice system to initiate the corresponding criminal case. Thus, within the framework of respect for due process and in the utmost transparency and cooperation with the relevant United Nations entities, we will stop at nothing to uncover the truth and punish those responsible.

Our commitment to international peace and security has also driven our country to play an active role in the field of disarmament. Like many countries, Uruguay has firmly promoted all initiatives aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and at regulating the control and reduction of conventional weapons, which every year cause thousands of innocent civilian casualties.

As a signatory of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, by virtue of which Latin America and the Caribbean became the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, Uruguay has decisively contributed to strengthening both the regional regime and the Treaty on the

Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is considered the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Uruguay has adhered fully to the five points identified by the Secretary-General. We believe that the international community must make the most of progress to date to advance firmly towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

The topic of this year's general debate is linked to the international peace and security agenda. We therefore welcome the selection of a topic that underlines the pressing need to strengthen the political capacities of the United Nations. Professional and accurate prevention and mediation efforts could save thousands of human lives and billions of dollars of material damage, thereby avoiding the loss of generations, growing resentment and despair, and a vicious cycle of violence can be broken only by reconciliation.

That is why we welcome efforts to strengthen the role of mediation and preventive diplomacy as mechanisms for dispute settlement. Such efforts can be carried out at several levels. There can be no doubt that the United Nations is the natural forum for such efforts, given its intrinsic legitimacy and impartiality. However, it cannot be denied that in practice such efforts must be complemented by the actions of regional entities and even individual countries, which can be very effective, as has been shown in several instances. In addition to the strengthening of the aforementioned capacities, confronting global issues requires the development of community spirit that requires more than combined political will. A systemic approach is fundamental.

Climate change is probably the most obvious example of an urgent global challenge. It is essential to immediately start enforcing adaptation and mitigation measures against its adverse effects, since a compromised environment will limit any development effort. We are aware that necessary measures require changes in modes of production to avoid seriously compromising resource distribution within our countries.

The Uruguayan Government strongly supports negotiations on climate change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We take this opportunity to call for accelerated efforts to ensure a second stage of commitments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the outcome of the next Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC. Furthermore, it is essential that progress be made in the negotiations on chemicals, especially in the context of the current exercise on mercury. The sensitivity and importance of this matter, which has greatly potential to harm the environment, requires the commitment of all countries in order to successfully conclude the current negotiations.

Another priority of our country is the particular situation of agriculture as it relates to the climate change phenomenon. A huge number of developing countries, including my own, depend on that sector, which is especially vulnerable to its negative consequences. That is why agriculture requires a special chapter in the framework of the UNFCC negotiations.

A new balance among many centres of power, the emergence of new States and intra-State conflicts have called for a reformulation of peace missions. Global threats include climate change and terrorism, and an international criminal justice entity has been established. Profound political changes have taken place in many countries. We now live in a different world. But the changes do not affect only political and security matters. Enormous transformations are taking place in the global economy and development issues. Developed countries are facing serious difficulties in their efforts to recover from a deep economic crisis. New, so-called emerging economies are playing a growing role in setting the direction of the world economy. In recent years, the need to establish new regulations and global agreements has become ever more apparent. We are entering a new era in international economic relations.

In that context, we must remember that peace and stability will not be achieved without sustainable development. This year, the United Nations has taken very significant steps in recognizing the link between security and development, which is born not from political declarations, but from empirical evidence, and is a sine qua non of capacity-building at the national level.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will provide us with a unique opportunity to renew the will to achieve the goals and commitments contained in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The quest for long-term development must be based on a

comprehensive development concept that takes economic, social and environmental dimensions into account. We believe it essential that Rio+20 achieve tangible results that benefit our citizens. For that to happen, issues related to technology transfer, technical training and financing for developing countries must be taken into account.

Food security is a fundamental component of Uruguay's development agenda, as well as one of its national priorities. We remain convinced that the current critical situation is caused by structural causes that must be resolved collectively and urgently. We are particularly concerned by the paralysis in the negotiations of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization. That ambitious exercise, one of whose objectives is the reduction or elimination of trade distortions, could, by strengthening trade, promote the development of the most disadvantaged countries of the world.

It is essential to eliminate agricultural subsidies. Countries that until a few decades ago were self-sufficient for their food needs now need to import a large part of what they consume, and they do so from countries that subsidize their agricultural production. The artificially low prices of agriculture exports, sustained for decades by some countries through subsidies and other trade-distorting measures and limitations on market access, are mainly responsible of the food security problems.

Stimulating investment to increase production and improve productivity, a successful conclusion of the Doha Round, as well as the transfer of adequate technology to developing countries, capable of achieving efficient agricultural economies, are fundamental to obtaining food security.

As a middle-income country, Uruguay still faces serious development challenges, particularly in eradicating poverty, diversifying production, introducing technological innovation and promoting renewable energy, to name but a few. The progress achieved must be consolidated, and to that end it is vital for us to be able to count on the support of the international community, and of the United Nations system in particular. I must reiterate the urgent need to consider in depth a new cooperation modality or scheme that takes into account the specific development needs of middle-income countries like Uruguay.

Uruguay is committed to the reform process of the Organization. Through the Global Governance Group, we have maintained a proactive attitude in order to promote a strong bond between the United Nations and informal discussion forums outside the system. However, it is critical to lead by example. For that reason, we believe that improving global governance is first an internal task of the United Nations system. In this regard, my country is very satisfied with the results obtained in the pilot programme of Delivering as One, whose next intergovernmental conference will be held in November in Montevideo.

For all these reason, but above all because of its firm commitment to the cause of peace and multilateralism, Uruguay is seeking a seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2016-2017. That would be our country's second time in the past 66 years, after having served in 1965-1966.

In conclusion, consolidating multilateralism is one of the most challenging international tasks. Multiple ongoing crises demand immediate response and action. The rise of new informal forums with a limited number of members but a growing influence in international governance requires an additional collective effort to strengthen the role of the United Nations as a forum for political discussion in which all States are able to participate in decision-making.

A permanent effort is required to combine effectiveness with legitimacy — a challenge that has become increasingly more significant as globalization deepens. We need a new United Nations for the twenty-first century. The first decade of the century has already run its course. History is harsh with those who cannot adapt to its challenges, and its consequences are bitter. At the United Nations, we are responsible for putting forward appropriate answers to the international community. There is still time.

The Acting President (spoke in Spanish): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danilo Astori, Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia.

Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*). I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Njie-Saidy (Gambia): We praise Almighty God for making another gathering of world leaders possible. Allow me to warmly congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. His proven leadership and competence will certainly be in great demand as we collectively confront some of the daunting challenges of our time. My delegation also views his election as a demonstration of the strong commitment of the brotherly State of Qatar to the fashioning of a stable and just world order. He will have our full support in the discharge of his mandate.

His predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss of Switzerland, also deserves our praise for the sterling work he did as President of the General Assembly. We wish him well in his future pursuits. We also congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment and wish him a fruitful second term. My delegation will render him all the support he will need as he helps to tackle the issues that are dear to us, especially the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the resolution of conflicts in Africa, among others.

The United Nations was founded as a world body primarily to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the theme chosen for this General Assembly — "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" — is particularly apt. My delegation is a strong believer in the role of mediation as a conflict resolution mechanism at both the national and international levels. We can all agree that mediation produces results. That is what our experience in West Africa, my own part of the world, tells us. At the national level, for example, in the Gambia we have instituted the alternative dispute resolution mechanism, among other mechanisms we have in place, with a view to settling disputes between and among our peoples and institutions.

For us in Africa, the mediation of conflicts, particularly with a view to amicably resolving them, has always been part and parcel of our rich cultural heritage and customary law. We must revive those time-honoured dispute-resolution traditions of our forebears. Experience has also shown that with strong regional and subregional leadership many of the intractable civil, political and electoral conflicts that beset and plague Africa could certainly be resolved through mediation.

Regional ownership of mediation processes is also essential. For example, recent conflicts in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau were all resolved through a combination of interventions by the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations. We must therefore always give mediation a chance before resorting to the use or threat of the use of force. The international community must give priority to mediation in any conflict before it threatens military invasion or outright military intervention without giving mediation a chance. It costs less to mediate — we all agree — than to launch a full-scale military intervention, only to have to come back again and rebuild and reconstruct.

Over the past decade, the leadership of West Africa, in close collaboration with the international community, has invested great material and human resources to bring the conflicts that affected that region to peaceful ends. Today, the region enjoys relative peace, but that does not mean that spoilers have given up attempts to derail the peace. We must be vigilant at all times. For example, the evils of drug trafficking, piracy, and the trafficking of illicit goods and arms have reared their ugly heads across our subregion of West Africa. The nature and extent of those crimes call for swift international action to nip them in the bud before it is too late.

All these crimes feed on each other and sow the seeds of terror, economic sabotage and indeed the collapse of social order. We must therefore pool our resources in the areas of detection, surveillance, law enforcement and prosecution in order to deny the culprits safe havens. In order to do that, we must come together and agree on a framework for cooperation, of

course with the support of the international community. We look forward to greater United Nations engagement with regional and subregional leaders and organizations in stamping out those menaces.

The Gambia will always be an agent of peace through mediation and shuttle diplomacy in West Africa and beyond. As we have done in the past, we will support all efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes within our subregion. We will also continue to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world, as we have already done.

With strong African leadership, we continue to witness the amicable resolution of many civil conflicts that plague the continent. The key lesson in most of those situations is early intervention by leaders who mediate between stakeholders. Regional leaders should always be put at the forefront of mediation efforts.

For that reason, we salute the untiring leadership of the African Union in bringing about peace in the Sudan. We equally salute the leadership of the Sudan for its magnanimity in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Accord, which led to the independence of South Sudan. My delegation encourages both sides to invest in their shared future through a negotiated settlement of the pending issues.

Let me also take this opportunity to encourage our brothers in Guinea and Niger, after successful democratic transitions, to bury the hatchet and move forward as united peoples. National reconciliation efforts should be diligently pursued by all stakeholders. We therefore call on the international community to render them all the support they need as they try to bring peace and development to their countries.

As a developing country, like all others we have our eyes set on the countdown to 2015, a landmark year for all of us. The Gambia and the entire international community have only a few more years before we can tell how many of the MDGs we have met. What is evident from all the reviews, however, is that we are surely on track to meet some of the MDGs but still struggling to meet others. We know for certain, for example, that the critical element for achieving all MDGs on the target date will remain international donor support and collaboration. We have just embarked upon our new programme for accelerated growth and employment, which is our blueprint for development in the Gambia for 2012-2015, which we earnestly believe will be generously supported by all our development partners and friends.

It is no secret that the ongoing financial and economic crisis, worsened by market volatility, is taking a huge toll on the meagre economic gains of our fragile economies. In view of our situation as least developed countries and of the vulnerabilities that we continue to encounter, it is urgent that we all support the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. We must not allow it to suffer the fate of its predecessor, which suffered from weak implementation.

It is our hope that our partners from the North will do all in their power to support the enhancement of our productive capacities. We also call on the emerging economies of the South to enhance their cooperation with us in ways that will render true meaning to South-South cooperation. My delegation is ready at all times to forge meaningful partnerships across the North and South in order to bring food security to our people, tackle youth unemployment through education and skill development, and enhance the quality and coverage of our health-care delivery systems.

In addition, we have to revisit the various programmes and strategies adopted by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and other global forums in order to comprehensively address the food security needs of developing countries. The small-scale farmer — including the female farmer — must be placed at the centre of the new Green Revolution.

The impact of climate change continues to pose a formidable challenge to all of us. The solutions to reversing the negative impacts of climate change through adaptation and mitigation initiatives are well known. Our problem today is the refusal of the biggest polluters to assume their responsibilities in reversing the negative trends of climate change occasioned by human activity. We cannot afford to be in denial for long. The science is solid and there for all to see, and the solutions are very clear, so let us embrace them by fulfilling our international obligations.

The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) should be about the implementation of commitments and not about reneging on them. It should also be about the announcement of workable initiatives and not about the

repackaging of previous unfulfilled commitments. Rio+20 should ultimately be about binding commitments. Let us bequeath to our children, and their children an Earth that is resilient and a better world for them.

My delegation would like to congratulate the delegation of Libya, especially the leadership of the National Transitional Council, on being steadfast in their drive to rescue Libya from the brink of the abyss. We have faith in that leadership and are convinced that it will institute the necessary reforms that the Libyan people have so valiantly fought for. As Libya embarks on the crucial task of reconciliation, reconstruction and nation building, we — as the first African country to have officially announced its recognition of and support for the National Transitional Council — would like to assure the Libyan leadership of our full collaboration and solidarity at all times.

The conflicts in the Middle East, both recent and long-standing, require fresh and honest mediation efforts with a view to stabilizing the region once and for all. The disorderly change that is sweeping across the region is a cause for concern as livelihoods are shattered and industries like tourism are destroyed, thereby creating more unemployment and entrenching endemic poverty. With regard to the Arab Spring, my delegation fully supports and hereby salutes the leadership role of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Gulf Cooperation Council in finding peaceful resolution to those conflicts through mediation, diplomacy and brotherhood.

In the same vein, we salute the role the AU has been playing in bringing to an end some of the most violent conflicts in human history on the African continent through mediation and in some cases through military intervention as a last resort. We have used former Heads of State as mediators in Africa and in councils of the wise, and some of those efforts have proven to be very successful.

One of the most intractable conflicts of our time is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The sad reality is that numerous United Nations resolutions continue to be flouted. The daily killing, collective punishment and humiliation of Palestinians are going on unabated. Denial of humanitarian assistance, essential medical supplies and construction materials to Palestinians has become the norm. For that reason, my delegation not only supports but recognizes an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within the confines of the 1967 borders. An independent Palestinian State with full rights and privileges like any other is long overdue. That is the only guarantor of lasting peace in that region.

The Islamic religion, which is synonymous with peace, is misunderstood and misrepresented in some quarters. We condemn those who turn themselves into suicide bombers to kill innocent people or conduct inhuman behaviour in the name of Islam, as such acts are contrary to Islamic values and teachings. Muslims, Christians, Jews and peoples of other faiths must all join hands, for once, in fighting terrorism of all shades. We must also be tolerant and indeed respectful of each other, no matter our beliefs, and live side by side in peace and harmony as one human race and one human family.

In the case of Syria, we call on the international community to encourage and support the Syrian Government and people to resolve their internal problems through diplomacy and peaceful means. Poverty should not be a pretext for violent and disorderly change of Government in developing countries.

The need for constructive dialogue in finding lasting and timely solutions to transboundary problems, wherever they exist, is more urgent today than ever before. Let us avoid postponing the search for a permanent solution to the decades-old conflict in the Nagorno Karabakh region. It is the responsibility of the international community to work with a greater sense of urgency to address the Nagorno Karabakh conflict without further delay.

The developments in Cuba continue to demonstrate to the world the inhumanity of maintaining the decades-old embargo imposed on that friendly country. The embargo is a manifestation of intolerance of other people's right to a political system of their choice. There is universal agreement that the embargo needs to come to an end without precondition and be replaced with good-neighbourliness, tolerance and respect for the legitimate right of Cubans to have a political system of their choice. We therefore once again call on the United States of America to lift the sanctions and embargo on Cuba now.

The case of Taiwan deserves better scrutiny by the international community. Taiwan, with a population

of 23 million people, continues to play an active and positive role on the international stage. In a highly integrated and interconnected world, almost all issues demand the full participation of and cooperation among all nations. Taiwan's efforts in promoting peace, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, deserve commendation and further encouragement by the General Assembly.

For example, over the past three years, Taiwan has engaged mainland China in dialogue on a wide range of issues ranging from agriculture and health to intellectual property rights and economic and commercial cooperation, among others. Furthermore, since 2009 Taiwan has been invited by the World Health Organization to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer. That practice and the related arrangements have established what has been termed the WHA model, which sets a useful precedent for Taiwan's greater participation in the United Nations system generally.

Given that Taiwan is today one of the leading technological and economic powerhouses of the world, its participation in global affairs is quite relevant, bearing in mind the numerous issues that we collectively confront. We must give it the prominence that it deserves. Issues such as natural disasters, terrorism, climate change, epidemics, financial meltdowns and many others require the engagement of every member of the international community, including Taiwan. We therefore urge the United Nations to find a suitable way to allow for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the specialized agencies and mechanisms of the United Nations system, including the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Climate Change Conferences immediately.

Reform should be a permanent feature on the agenda of all international organizations. Cosmetic reforms or the deliberate stalling of overdue reforms seriously undermine the effective responsiveness of organizations. In 2005, as we all remember, a draft of reform measures was introduced by the General Assembly, which led to reforms in management of the Secretariat, human resources administration, the creation of the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the elaboration of new norms.

The then Secretary-General remarked that no reform of the United Nations is complete without reform of the Security Council. Let us not delude ourselves. The Security Council urgently needs comprehensive reforms. A major element in the reform of the Council is the glaring underrepresentation of Africa, for example, in all its categories of membership. Africa certainly needs to be adequately and properly represented, and we will not give up on what is a legitimate demand. What is even more appalling is that negotiations are progressing at a snail's pace. Although we are mindful of other positions, we are convinced that negotiations must lead to a just outcome. Security Council reform is long overdue, and the lack of it is undermining the credibility of our Organization and the legitimacy of the Council's decisions.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to repeat what we said before. Reform of the United Nations must recognize the geopolitical realities of the African continent and its peoples. Africa is no longer the colony of any country and must be respected and treated as such. The system of veto power and flawed representation in the Security Council is not acceptable, can no longer be tolerated and in fact runs counter to the spirit and letter of the basic principles of equality and fair play as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency

Mr. Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ssekandi (Uganda): Uganda joins other delegations in congratulating Mr. Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of this body. My delegation has confidence in his ability to steer our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Joseph Deiss for his effective stewardship of the work of the General Assembly during the past session.

Uganda takes this opportunity to congratulate the Government and the people of South Sudan on attaining statehood and becoming the 193rd Member of the United Nations. Uganda also congratulates Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment as Secretary-General.

The theme of this session's general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", is most appropriate in the light of the conflict situations in various parts of the world, including Africa. When actualized, the peaceful settlement of disputes saves lives and property that would otherwise be lost if force were used. Strategic interventions, such as mediation, are necessary to mitigate conflict situations and avert crises that threaten the stability not only of nations, but also of entire regions, with adverse effects on development and people's livelihoods. Mediation is a necessary and essential tool for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, as it is aims to support disputing parties in the process of negotiating a mutual understanding or agreement.

Uganda has consistently advocated an enhanced role for subregional and regional organizations in conflict prevention and resolution. When those organizations are involved in mediating disputes, they play a critical role in bringing about sustainable peace and security. It was against this background that Uganda supported and sponsored resolution 65/283 on mediation as a tool for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The resolution provides a basis for consolidating normative mediation efforts, reinforcing mediation support activities and enhancing the role of Member States.

Uganda has been involved in various initiatives to bring peace to the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and the African continent as a whole. Our involvement included participation in the Burundi peace process and in the negotiations, led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, on the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which culminated in the birth of a new nation, South Sudan, which is now participating as an equal partner in the community of nations.

In the case of Somalia, in addition to our contribution to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Uganda continues to support the engagement of the Somali Transitional Federal Government with other actors so as to promote dialogue in the context of the Djibouti Agreement and the Kampala Accord. In order to consolidate the gains realized on the ground, the United Nations and the rest of the international community must urgently strengthen support to Somalia by means of capacity-building for the Somali Transitional Federal Institutions; the deployment of the additional authorized 3,000 troops; the approval of a reliable and predictable funding mechanism and of the required aviation assets to AMISOM; and the provision of urgent humanitarian relief and assistance to meet the basic needs of the people through quick-impact projects in such areas as health care, water and sanitation.

Our experience in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa is that if such efforts are to succeed and be sustainable, a number of factors come into play. First, peace initiatives should be led by the region, with strong support from regional organizations, the United Nations and other relevant actors. Secondly, it is sometimes important to initially give priority to peace before justice in order to strengthen confidence-building between parties. Thirdly, peace and reconciliation mechanisms, including transitional all-inclusive administrations, need to be established to heal the wounds of conflict. Fourthly, post-conflict recovery and reconstruction programmes or projects should be instituted simultaneously so as to demonstrate the benefits of peace dividends.

Mediation is a worthwhile investment. It costs much less than other undertakings, such as peacekeeping or peace enforcement. In terms of benefits, effective mediation can avert unnecessary wars and their attendant consequences, such as the loss of life and property, and contribute to building capacity for home-grown solutions to address conflict. The mutual confidence that normally results from mediation between parties can also be instrumental in achieving inclusive political and other arrangements following the conclusion of peace agreements. Once

achieved, such arrangements have a positive impact on the consolidation of peace and security, as well as on sustainable post-conflict reconstruction, recovery and development.

Uganda believes that potential differences between and within countries are better addressed using home-grown solutions. External influences or interventions do not necessarily offer sustainable solutions to conflict. On the contrary, the latter tend at times to contribute to a cycle of destabilizing tendencies.

It is therefore important that the involvement of the United Nations, the international community and other actors take full account of the interests and concerns of all parties. Hence, there is a need for close coordination, consultation and information-sharing with the parties concerned. The support of the international community should target areas mutually agreed upon with the parties concerned. It is also important to underscore the fact that, where potential conflict situations arise and external support becomes necessary, the international community should provide a timely, adequate and robust response.

It is equally necessary to build and strengthen the mediation capacities of subregional and regional organizations. Specifically, in the case of conflicts in Africa, our preferred solution is peaceful settlement through mediation, not military intervention. In the case of the Libyan crisis, the African Union (AU) has called upon the National Transitional Council to establish an all-inclusive transitional Government, as proposed in the AU road map for the peaceful resolution of the Libyan conflict.

Uganda would like to make a strong case to this Assembly that Africa should be given the chance to resolve its conflicts. Africa has strong political will to handle them, and any interventions should be aimed at supporting African initiatives to find peaceful solutions. It is therefore imperative that our partners recognize the existing dispute resolution mechanisms of the regional bodies in Africa. I also call upon the United Nations to fully support Africa in that regard.

Besides, the role of women in mediation must be appreciated and enhanced. Experience has shown that women can contribute a lot to efforts aimed at peaceful settlement of disputes and at conflict prevention and resolution. It is therefore vital that women become increasingly involved in mediation efforts and processes.

On the Israeli-Palestinian question, Uganda has consistently called upon the Israeli and the Palestinian parties to muster the necessary courage to negotiate and reach a peaceful settlement based on a two-State solution, that is, Israel and the State of Palestine living side by side peacefully and within secure borders. We urge both parties to urgently resume negotiations in order to reach a two-State solution that will guarantee durable peace.

The outcome of this debate should include practical and pragmatic actions to address some of the challenges relating to mediation. These include, but are not limited to, issues involved in the adequacy and predictability of the requisite resources, capacity-building at the national, subregional and regional levels, the involvement of women, and the strengthening of coordination and collaboration in mediation efforts and processes.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Edward Kiwanuka Ssekandi, Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam.

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of His Majesty and the people of Brunei Darussalam, I would like to congratulate our new President, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz

Al-Nasser. These are not only personal congratulations. We also congratulate his country, Qatar, our fellow Member of the United Nations. We greatly appreciate its significant efforts to promote dialogue, consultation and mediation in many difficult situations, both in its own region and far beyond. Thus we thank the President, as its representative, and warmly welcome him to the General Assembly as the representative of us all.

We would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss. His term of office saw another impressive contribution by the United Nations to meeting the great international challenges Members face in the first decade of this new century.

Some of that work began right here, in this building, with our efforts to reform the Security Council and revitalize the General Assembly. Other efforts addressed our world at large and the confrontation between essential economic growth and critical environmental realities that it faces. Still others were aimed directly at the people we represent. Those efforts addressed their health and food security; considered their personal and legal status, whether at home or as members of immigrant communities; and examined the systems of governance under which they live.

This is a fine record, and we thank the outgoing President for his leadership. He was greatly assisted in his work by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We offer the Secretary-General our very best wishes for the coming year. We welcome his reappointment and join fellow Members in thanking his staff and the United Nations volunteer workers, peacekeepers and agencies for all of their efforts in many extremely difficult situations.

It is a tribute to their work that one of the longest-running and most complex situations of all has been resolved this year. As a result, we add our own words of welcome to the Government and the people of South Sudan as a new Member of the United Nations. We also commend all parties involved in the process of dialogue, negotiation and final resolution. At the same time, it is our deepest wish that these same sentiments may soon be expressed to the parties directly involved in efforts to reach a fair and equitable two-State solution to the situation in Palestine.

The President of the Assembly has asked us to consider the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. In doing so, we follow the direction given by His Majesty the Sultan in his address to the General Assembly in 1984, when we had the honour of becoming a Member of this great Organization. In outline, it committed us to mutual respect for territorial integrity and the principles of dialogue and negotiation in disputes, no matter how long or how frustrating the process may be.

We still adhere to that principle. We give whatever practical assistance we can, whenever asked. We do so directly, through peacekeeping and monitoring efforts, and indirectly, through financial contributions made bilaterally and to relevant United Nations and regional bodies. In these ways, we seek to follow the commitments made in our first General Assembly debate.

Nevertheless, we increasingly recognize that those commitments were made over a quarter of a century ago. Twenty-five years is a common definition of a generation in human terms, which means that a new generation is now moving into positions of authority. Behind it, a further generation is now coming of age. It has no personal memory of the global situation that shaped international policy in the Cold War era. Although both generations are naturally still influenced by those times and the leaders who brought them to this point, they are also new generations, for whom the new century shapes world affairs.

In our statement to the General Assembly three years ago (see A/63/PV.10), we outlined our approach to this by broadly setting out what are now regarded as the challenges of this new century. Some involve security in all of its forms — political, physical and economic. Others address the natural environment and the effects of climate change. Still others raise questions about sustainable development and many challenges arise from the concept of good governance, both nationally and in world organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the Group of Twenty and even the United Nations itself. We have given our full support to the great institutions of which we are members and will continue to do so.

But our Government has emphasized one thing throughout this year in all international gatherings we have been privileged to attend. It is not a change in our

overall approach; it represents a particular focus. It means that more and more we are trying to identify the challenges in basic human terms, because we feel that such a focus relates directly to the wise theme the President proposed for this debate.

We acknowledge with deep respect that successful mediation has always been a cherished objective of the United Nations, and we strongly support that ideal. At the same time, however, we maintain that no mediation can be successful unless the parties involved share common ground.

What concerns us is that the dynamics of the twenty-first century have the potential to exclude many from this common ground. It will become the exclusive territory of great unseen globalized forces, whether in the market, the workplace or in the world of great decision-making forums. That development could be so divisive as to destroy any common ground.

We believe such common ground will only be created by ordinary people, as individuals and in their families and communities, who feel that they are indeed occupying that common ground. For them, political security lies in the principles of diplomacy among all nations, especially respect for each other's traditions, values, beliefs and ways of life. Physical security means the rule of law. Economic security is food on the table, a job and the best possible support for health, education and old age.

In all these efforts, we have felt well guided by the United Nations, above all through the encouragement it provides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the confidence in the future that they give to all people. That, we believe, will lead us towards the common ground we are trying to discover. It will be reached when it is shared among the most powerful of industrialized nations and the smallest of threatened island communities. The search for common ground is the immense task of both present and future generations. We believe that only when it is concluded can mediation successfully perform the role suggested in the President's theme.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam for the statement he has just made.

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor (Cambodia): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in expressing my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We are confident that under his able leadership, our deliberations will be guided towards a successful conclusion.

I would like also to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on being unanimously chosen by the General Assembly to serve a second term as Secretary-General. The Royal Government of Cambodia acknowledges with great admiration his outstanding leadership and untiring efforts to overcome the many current global challenges.

Cambodia warmly welcomes the Republic of South Sudan as a new Member of the United Nations. We will continue to dispatch more peacekeepers under with United Nations peacekeeping operations to help with humanitarian activities and demining in that friendly new State.

We live in an interconnected world where global challenges such as economic and financial crises, climate change, energy and food security, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, among others, have become increasingly complex and continue to haunt the entire world.

The global economy remains somewhat fragile, and there are many risks and challenges to a durable exit from the crisis. The growth of the world economy has decelerated in 2011, and the global economy now faces three major challenges: sovereign debt, slow growth and social instability.

The problem of unemployment has been very severe in the advanced economies, and inflation is emerging in the developing economies. That has created havoc in many parts of the world, as continued instability in the financial sector, especially in the

United States and the euro zone, has dampened global trade. That has an effect on exports, in particular of developing countries. Therefore, a wide range of policy responses and long-overdue reforms must be implemented to accelerate growth and bring the global economy out of the crisis.

The crisis has reaffirmed the importance of reform in global economic and financial governance, including strengthening the institutional role of the International Monetary Fund.

Asia has become an essential partner in the global economy and has taken the lead in advancing global recovery. For instance, Cambodia's economy is growing, after a decline in 2008 and 2009, with an expected growth rate of 8.7 per cent this year. With strong, robust economies, East Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are well positioned to assume their responsibilities to contribute to addressing the global economic and financial crisis.

Although some significant successes have been achieved in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), most developing countries, in particular least developed countries (LDCs), will continue to face many huge hurdles on their path to reach the MDG targets.

Continued economic and financial instability in the developed world has exacerbated uncertainty in funding for development projects in poor countries. Persistently high fuel oil prices are straining every economic aspect of developing countries. The worsening food security situation is holding back progress in reducing malnutrition and child mortality. The burden of debt repayment constitutes another major challenge for the LDCs in meeting the MDG targets.

Faced with these tremendous challenges, poverty reduction remains the highest and foremost global priority. It requires steady economic growth and a more pro-poor policy.

In the context of the global effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals, Cambodia has been listed among the 20 countries making the most absolute progress on the MDGs. Last year it was accorded the 2010 MDG Award by the MDG Awards Committee in New York for its outstanding progress towards achievement of Goal 6.

There is no doubt that climate change, with its devastating impact worldwide, has become a constant threat to our existence. Drought and flooding have become more frequent and more severe in many parts of the world, affecting millions of people. The current horrific drought in the Horn of Africa represents another most painful tragedy caused by global warming. The threat of climate change is a reality and a huge challenge for the global community.

It is regrettable that many of the promises made during the Copenhagen and Cancún meetings of the United Nations Climate Change Conference to assist developing countries cope with climate change remain to be delivered in a timely manner. Now, while the world is facing further financial turmoil, let us not forget that actions on climate change cannot wait. Climate change is progressing every day, triggering more frequent natural disasters. The developing countries are hoping for timely support for their efforts to address, adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and to develop clean energy. They call on the developed world to honour their commitments under the Copenhagen and Cancún conferences.

The seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban, South Africa, in November must not become another delusion but a place to demonstrate our collective will to share the responsibility and to achieve a real breakthrough in facing climate change. While obstacles remain to achieving a binding accord, Cambodia hopes that the Kyoto Protocol, which is due to expire next year, will be extended during the Durban conference.

Cambodia, for its part, successfully launched its own initiative, which is called Cambodia Climate Change Alliance, in 2009, with the objective of strengthening our national institutions to deal with climate change risks. Cambodia is also implementing numerous projects within the framework of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries while actively promoting adaptation and mitigation measures through our project to promote climate-resilient water management and agricultural practices in rural Cambodia.

Food and energy security remain major issues of global concern. Although the recent surge in energy costs has subsided, the price of fuel oil remains

extremely volatile. High fuel oil prices are a major burden on poor countries, which lack financial resources and know-how to develop alternative and clean energy sources. As the world depends heavily on fuel oil, we should act in concert to prevent unruly speculation and price instability, which have devastating effects on developing countries' efforts to reduce poverty and meet the MDG targets. It may be time to consider establishing a world body comprised of major fuel oil producers and consumers to ensure a reasonable price limit. The world should not be at the mercy of oil producers.

A more holistic approach for addressing energy security is the transfer of relevant knowledge and technology to assist developing countries in exploiting alternative sources of energy. Reduced reliance on fossil fuel will also contribute significantly to slowing the pace of global warming and climate change while reducing emissions of the harmful greenhouse gases produced by burning fuel oil.

On the other hand, energy security is closely linked to food security. Soaring fuel oil prices in recent years have not only caused food prices to rise but have also reduced land devoted to agriculture through the change to production of bioenergy as an alternative to fuel oil. A balanced approach must be taken to address that twin problem. Food insecurity is also caused and aggravated by the global financial and economic meltdown and increasing world population.

The number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high. Global population growth will inevitably lead to increased demand for both energy and food.

For its part, Cambodia is doing its best to contribute to world food security by intensifying rice production as the top priority of Government policy. More and more rice will be available for export. Cambodia is also seeking to establish an association of rice exporters under the framework of the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, comprised of five rice-exporting countries in South-East Asia: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The association will contribute to stabilizing the food market and preventing speculation in food prices.

(*spoke in French*)

With respect to global peace and security, one of today's gravest threats to humanity is terrorism. Despite the enormous efforts made by the international community to prevent and combat acts of terrorism, such acts continue to occur daily almost everywhere in the world. No country has been spared by terrorism. Its networks comprise a vast and complex web of interlinked criminal activities, including money-laundering, weapons trafficking and organized crime.

It is therefore time for us to consider whether the antiterrorism measures adopted to date have been sufficient. Cambodia fully supports United Nations efforts to create a global coalition against terrorism. In that context, Cambodia believes that there is an urgent need to finalize the draft United Nations global counter-terrorism convention, which has been discussed for many years within the Organization. The adoption of that convention would strengthen and broaden the legal frameworks to combat those crimes against humanity.

On weapons of mass destruction, the international community has made notable progress in recent years in the area of arms control and disarmament. Cambodia welcomes the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed last year by the United States and Russia, which has made an important contribution towards eliminating weapons of mass destruction. However, existing nuclear weapon stockpiles remain a serious threat to humanity. Cambodia requests States that have not yet signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to do so as soon as possible, for we all share the responsibility to guarantee a more secure world for all.

In that context, Cambodia has participated for several years in demining operations in South Sudan, Lebanon and in other United Nations peacekeeping missions, including Chad and the Central African Republic.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most protracted and volatile conflicts in the Middle East. Cambodia calls on the two parties to manifest political will to overcome their mutual animosity in order create an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of peace negotiations in the interests of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Cambodia has always supported the creation of the Palestinian State based upon its 1967 borders. In that spirit, Cambodia supports the rights of Palestine to become a full Member of the United Nations at this session of the General Assembly. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that neither Palestinians nor Israelis could live anywhere else. It would therefore be far better if both peoples could live side by side in peace and as good neighbours. Cambodia sees no other solution to that issue.

The embargo against Cuba has lasted for too long. Today it is an anachronism, a terrible injustice against the Cuban people, who have been the first to suffer. That is why Cambodia is today renewing its call for lifting this embargo, which has brought the Cuban people nothing but suffering. It is time to end the sanctions and put an end to the long trial they have undergone.

Given the changes in the world of today and the multiple challenges they bring, the main bodies of the United Nations should be reformed in order to deal with the problems we currently confront. Cambodia believes that such reform must be comprehensive. If we cannot arrive at a consensus on Security Council reform today, perhaps we should move forward with reform of the General Assembly, so as to give it more power and thus enable it to play a more meaningful role in tackling the great challenges of our time, as the most representative and democratic body of the United Nations. In regard to the Security Council, reforms should ensure that it reflects the realities of today's world through equitable distribution of representation among permanent and non-permanent members.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Eamon Gilmore, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland.

Mr. Gilmore (Ireland): We are living in times of breathtaking change. Much of it is good change: scientific and technological progress making real advances for humankind, an ever more interconnected world strengthening economic opportunity and developmental potential, the profound transformations that are sweeping through North Africa at present.

But there is also much that is disturbing: violent conflict in many parts of the world, growing environmental damage to our planet, the ravages of a global financial and economic crisis, the continuing scourges of poverty, inequality, human rights abuses, terrorism and extremism and a range of other threats to global peace and security.

To respond to these multiple and interrelated challenges, we have one constant anchor: the United Nations. No other organization is as well equipped to develop common answers to the big questions of our time. No other organization has the same global impact and legitimacy. With our increasing need for global solutions, the United Nations, which represents almost all the countries on earth, has the political, moral and legal authority to act. While there may be no easy answers to the questions being posed, our best chance of finding effective responses lies in the collective deliberation and action provided for by this Organization.

Ireland is deeply committed to the United Nations. We look to it to uphold and defend the universal values of peace, security, human rights and development that are set out in the United Nations Charter. The Charter tells us that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The United Nations is the embodiment of freedom and equality. It is a bulwark defending these core human values in a changing and uncertain world.

Freedom and equality: these are the values that underpin Ireland's response to key global and regional challenges. It is our deep commitment to freedom and equality that places Ireland in the vanguard of international efforts to resolve conflict, to create and maintain peace, to eradicate hunger and underdevelopment, and to put an end to human rights abuses around the world.

The values of freedom and equality and the essential ideals of the Charter are not just words written on a page. Since we assembled here 12 months ago, we have seen them expressed in North Africa and the Middle East in a million acts of courage and liberation. We have watched the people of the Arab Spring, who have asserted their rights and stood up to oppression and corruption. Tahrir — freedom — has now passed into all our vocabularies as a byword for all those no longer prepared to see their basic human rights suppressed.

The events of the past nine months in North Africa and the Middle East are historic in their sweep and profound in their implications. These have been genuinely popular movements demanding reform,

freedom and equality. The leadership role exercised within them by women has been striking and inspirational.

The people of the Arab Spring have stood up and stood together to assert their basic rights and freedoms: the right to choose their own leaders, the right not to live in fear of the knock on the door, the right to live freely and openly, the right to provide a decent life and a hopeful future for themselves and their families. They remind us that the human thirst for basic freedoms is unquenchable, and they should inspire us in the work we do here. In rising up to grasp their own destiny, the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are tracing the path of those others, once in the shadow of the Iron Curtain, who, in demanding those ordinary freedoms, created extraordinary history.

The United Nations has, of course, played an indispensable role in supporting these developments. Starting with the key Security Council resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011), it has led international efforts to support the Libyan people. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the National Transitional Council who took up Libya's seat at the United Nations this week, and I pledge Ireland's full support as they seek to rebuild Libya and to fulfil the democratic aspirations of the Libyan people.

We cannot know the final outcome of the events we are witnessing. We must ensure that the democratic changes under way are consolidated and that the promise of profound improvements in human rights in the countries concerned, in particular in relation to the role of women, is fully realized.

However, the situation in Syria continues to arouse the deepest international concern. President Al-Assad and his Government seem oblivious to the demands of the Syrian people for change and to the lessons of the Arab Spring elsewhere. They appear determined to respond with further oppression and violence. Our basic message to the Syrian leader is this: no leader who refuses to listen to what his people are saying and to act on their clearly expressed desire for peace and reform can expect to remain in power.

In the Middle East peace process, the search for freedom and equality has yet to bear fruit. The Arab-Israeli conflict remains depressingly deadlocked. Unless this deadlock is broken, the opportunities for yet another generation of children will be destroyed.

The situation in the Middle East is urgent. After 20 years of failed initiatives, disillusionment about the ability of the political process to deliver a settlement is deepening. Young Palestinians in particular are frustrated and despairing. The position of the moderate Palestinian leadership is under threat. Never has it been more important to show that politics works and that a peaceful, just and lasting settlement is within reach through negotiation.

Everybody knows what a final and comprehensive settlement would involve: two States, based on the 1967 borders with mutually agreed land swaps, living side by side in peace and security. It is more pressing than ever to launch direct negotiations that would address all the core issues and culminate in such an agreement within a specified time frame.

Ireland has long been an advocate of the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian State within borders based on those of 1967. We want to see the peoples of Palestine and Israel living as good neighbours in peace, security and prosperity as soon as possible — and this can come about only through negotiation. Ireland strongly opposes all action that serves to hinder or delay negotiations, such as violent attacks on civilians and their property or Israel's illegal settlement of occupied Palestinian territory.

The decision of President Abbas to seek membership in the United Nations for Palestine is entirely legitimate and understandable. Palestine has the same right to membership in the United Nations as Ireland or any other Member of this Organization. Some would seek to argue that Palestine cannot be recognized as a State because its borders remain to be agreed on. But if the borders of Palestine are still a matter for negotiation, then so, by definition, are those of Israel, which is rightly a full Member of the United Nations.

Membership in the United Nations of itself, however, would not change the unstable and unacceptable situation on the ground. It does not remove the compelling need for negotiations. Nor will it offer a legitimate excuse to avoid negotiations. Whatever happens here at the United Nations, negotiations must resume as soon as possible. The statement issued last Friday by the Quartet provides a framework for precisely that.

What recognition of Palestinian statehood would do, however, is to give dignity and support to the

Palestinian people, who have suffered for too long. It would also be a tangible demonstration of the commitment of the international community and the United Nations to an agreed settlement between two sovereign States, living side by side in peace, security and prosperity.

The day will come, not too far off, when the General Assembly will be asked to vote on a proposal to admit Palestine as a Member of the Organization, or perhaps, as an interim step towards the achievement of that goal, to accord Palestine non-member observer State status. Provided that the resolution is drafted in terms that are reasonable and balanced, I expect Ireland to give its full support. In Ireland, we know from our own experience that peace does not come easily. It requires political will and difficult compromises. But we also know the benefits of peace. There can be no doubting the hugely transformative power for the Middle East region of a final end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The international community has invested far too much effort and resources over the past decades not to do all it can now to assist a return to direct talks by the two sides. In the words of Martin Luther King, we cannot ignore the fierce urgency of now.

I again urge the Government of Israel to halt all settlement expansion. I also call on it to end the unjust blockade of Gaza by opening up land crossings to normal commercial, human and humanitarian traffic.

The search for freedom and equality drives the enormously important work being done by the United Nations and by its individual Member States in the area of development.

The Millennium Development Goals provide the essential framework for international development efforts up to 2015. As we look beyond 2015, the United Nations must remain central to the fight to end poverty and hunger in the world.

A century and a half ago, the streets around this building where we now meet, and throughout this great city, were thronged with tens of thousands of Irish people who came here as refugees from famine. To this very day, the memory of that time remains with the Irish people.

Hunger remains humankind's greatest enemy. As we meet today in New York, some 12 million people are struggling to find food to keep their families alive in the Horn of Africa. Seven hundred and fifty-thousand are at imminent risk of death from hunger. The immediate cause of this crisis is drought, but its severity is the result of a combination of factors, including conflict, insecurity and persistent underdevelopment. We have a moral obligation to act in the face of such suffering.

Ireland is providing over $67 million to the Horn of Africa in 2011 and 2012, in direct life saving humanitarian assistance and through measures to enhance food security. The clear lesson of previous humanitarian emergencies in Africa is that we must address the causes in order to prevent future crises. The need to address the systemic global hunger crisis is, and will remain, central to Ireland's development assistance programme. Our objective is to save lives today and build new futures for communities ravaged by hunger. The Scaling Up Nutrition movement, launched at the United Nations a year ago, makes a clear link between under-nutrition among mothers and babies and the building of a healthy, educated and prosperous society in the future.

We need to act together now to provide long-term sustainable solutions that will decisively break the cycle of food shortages. We believe that a strong focus is essential on building the productivity of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, 80 per cent of whom are women and the primary care givers of children and providers of food, fuel and water.

We know that climate change is disproportionately affecting their lives and their livelihoods. Their farms and livestock are less productive. Their coping mechanisms are less effective. Over time, they are vulnerable to abject poverty and despair. I believe that there is a compelling case for "climate justice", namely, bringing developmental fairness to bear on the climate change agenda.

The global financial and economic crisis presents major challenges for all of us in our efforts to maintain solidarity with developing countries. Aid budgets are under significant pressure. But we will not turn our backs on the world's poorest. In Ireland, despite the economic difficulties that we are facing, and because we recognize our moral obligation and our interests, values and principles as a member of the international community, development will remain at the heart of our foreign policy. We remain committed to the United

Nations target of providing 0.7 per cent of gross national income to Official Development Assistance (ODA). We will continue to work to achieve that target.

As Ireland will sustain its ODA effort, we will also maintain our longstanding engagement across critical areas of United Nations work. We remain strongly supportive of the vital role of the United Nations in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Recently a 440-strong battalion of peacekeepers from the Irish Defence Forces returned to serve with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the first country to which we deployed peacekeepers more than half a century ago.

A deep attachment to the values of freedom and equality and other core human rights principles underpins our candidature for election to the Human Rights Council at the elections to be held in 2012. If elected, we look forward to making a strong contribution to the work of enhancing the Council's performance and promoting respect for human rights worldwide.

We will continue to push for the disarmament machinery of the United Nations to become more responsive to twenty-first century imperatives. Key challenges for the year ahead include the implementation of the agreements reached at last year's Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, as well as the negotiation of a robust arms trade treaty. We will maintain a strong focus on the implementation and universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, adopted in Dublin three years ago.

Regional organizations have always been vital partners for the United Nations in the areas of peace, security and conflict resolution. Next year, Ireland will chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We look forward to making our contribution to the resolution of the so-called protracted conflicts within the OSCE region. Our chairmanship will be a practical demonstration of Ireland's strong commitment to multilateralism and will draw on our own national experience of conflict resolution.

Over the past week, the Assembly has heard of a formidable array of challenges facing the world. Peace and security, human rights, the elimination of hunger: these are among the great moral imperatives of our time. Underlying each of them is the need to assert the freedom and equality of all human beings. Now more than ever, the United Nations is demonstrating that it is the home for these fundamental values and goals and the arena in which we can best pursue collective solutions.

Ireland will play its full part in the search for those solutions. Whether it is to bring peace to parts of the world ravaged by conflict, relief to those threatened by famine and starvation or protection to those afflicted by human rights abuses, we will make our contribution. We will stand up, in the Assembly and elsewhere, for fairness, for justice, for freedom and for equality, in the conduct of international relations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kenneth Baugh, Deputy Primer Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Baugh (Jamaica): I would like to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We are confident that his extensive diplomatic experience will inform his leadership at this session. I assure him of my delegation's full support.

During the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, we benefited from the skilled leadership of His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss. I wish to recognize his sterling contribution to the work of that session.

We join others in welcoming the newest Member of the United Nations family — the Republic of South Sudan. The emergence of South Sudan as a sovereign State underscores the fundamental value and relevance of the theme of this year's General Assembly session, namely, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means". We salute the tenacity of the people of South Sudan in their struggle to gain statehood after five decades of conflict. We urge all sides and factions not to allow rivalries and revenge to impede growth and development. The international community must assist South Sudan as it embarks on the daunting journey of stabilization and nation building.

We look out at a global political landscape that is marked by turbulence and uncertainty. The developments over the past several months in the Middle East and North Africa in particular are stark reminders that the legitimate aspirations of citizens for

freedom, inclusive Government and respect for human rights cannot be indefinitely suppressed.

Longstanding disputes and pockets of political instability and conflict continue to fester in several parts of the world, resulting in social and economic dislocation and humanitarian crises. If the United Nations is to effectively respond to those situations of conflict, its preventive diplomacy capacity, including mediation capacity, must be strengthened.

Many conflicts have their roots in racial and religious intolerance, resulting in social exclusion, marginalization and the alienation of people. The High-level Meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, obliged us to reflect on the global community's inadequate compliance with the objectives of the Programme of Action. Recognizing the danger in such situations of potential conflict and providing full support for the Programme are congruent with the principles implied in the theme for this session of the General Assembly.

Related to that is the continued support of the international community for the project to erect a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as a visible message of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Jamaica thanks all those countries that have contributed to the erection of the memorial and looks forward to its completion within a reasonable time frame.

Peace and development are mutually reinforcing and intrinsically linked to growth and prosperity. It is therefore important that we consciously seek to strengthen and support the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, recognizing the linkages between peacekeeping and peacebuilding and the transition from stabilization to consolidation.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is long overdue. It is time to end the occupation of Palestinian territory. It is time for the people of Palestine and Israel to live in peace and mutual security. Jamaica remains unwavering in its support for a just, lasting and comprehensive agreement that recognizes the Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and guarantees the security of Israel. The focus must now be on ending the stalemate and reviving direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. In that regard, Jamaica welcomes the declarations to the General Assembly by both Palestine and Israel of their readiness to do so.

Both sides must now re-engage in good faith, taking no action that could undermine the possibility of a durable solution. Central to that must be Israel's cessation of settlement building and expansion in the occupied territories and, on the part of the Palestinian leadership and people, the renunciation of violence against Israel and acceptance of its right to exist. The door to peaceful negotiations will not be forever open, nor can there be a continuing delay to Palestine's assumption of its rightful place in the global community of States.

The spread of globalization is well advanced, and our economies and growth prospects are interlinked in a vast network of economic opportunities. In these difficult financial times, developing countries are forced to take painful policy decisions aimed at recalibrating our economic plans to address immediate challenges while laying the groundwork for the fulfilment of our long-term development goals.

The balancing act that this involves can have dire consequences for our most vulnerable nationals. We all have to take ownership of our own development process and the necessary steps to provide an economic environment that is conducive to growth and prosperity. To that end, we are compelled to adopt approaches that are innovative, pro-active and collaborative. It is through adopting such approaches that many countries and regions have made significant inroads in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I wish to refer to the struggles of two neighbouring Caribbean countries to achieve development. Haiti, in the wake of its disruptive disaster, and in line with its successful efforts for political organization, needs the continued support of the international community to foster its development, if its democratic gains are to be consolidated. Cuba must have the space to foment its own development, free from the decades-long embargo that has slowed its growth, but not its will to improve the welfare of its people and that of other developing countries. A strong Cuban economy, integrated into the Caribbean marketplace, is essential to the region's development.

We are faced with the reality that, although we all operate in one global economy, with the same aspirations for growth and sustainable development,

we do not all have the same resources or capabilities. In addition to being acutely vulnerable to the vagaries of the global economic environment, the development prospects of many developing countries are frequently undermined by environmental degradation and climate change.

Classifications that are ostensibly positive, such as our own designation as an upper-middle-income country, serve to obscure several of the development challenges that we continue to face, particularly in accessing development financing and assistance, which are critical to our development process and the attainment of the MDGs. The range of socio-economic characteristics and levels of development of countries that fall in the middle-income category is indicative of the need for us to move towards harmonization of the criteria used in classification and resources allocation.

Developing countries like ours have undertaken painful adjustments to achieve fiscal discipline and macroeconomic stability within an open economy. We continue to pursue free trade agreements at the regional, hemispheric and global levels. However, the missing link to progress is the urgent need to build capacities in developing countries through infrastructure development, institution-building and expanding and enhancing productive capacity for competitiveness and to meet international quality standards.

Moving from an economy primarily driven by commodities to one that is value-added, knowledge-based, innovative and technology-driven is a transformation that, although challenging for developing countries, must be achieved. Without effective partnerships between the large and small economies for mutual benefit, balanced trade and shared growth, that is unlikely to occur.

I speak here positively of the increasing South-South cooperation that offers hope to many developing countries. We have long recognized that we can maximize our growth prospects through increased economic partnerships and investment opportunities, which ultimately lead to improvements in trade relations. Indeed, the reality is that development aid is an essential resource, which is used by developing countries to offset the financial burden involved in the execution of major development projects.

Unfortunately, much development aid and assistance to developing countries continue to fall short of the agreed goal of 0.7 per cent of gross national income, as some of our developed partners fail to meet their commitments. Closing the gap between commitment to development and the provision of resources that will facilitate the implementation of its various components requires political courage. We commend those partners who have maintained or exceeded their official development assistance targets despite their own economic challenges.

We continue to count on the support of our partners and the international community to help drive our social and development goals and to keep our safety nets in place. International financial and development assistance help to strengthen our development process and to address setbacks from external shocks on our economic planning and social investments. Development funding is critical in the recovery of our agricultural, mining and tourism industries, which are often adversely affected by climate change and the impact of natural disasters. So, too, are the transfer of technology and capacity building.

We urge our partners to recommit to the development agenda, both here at the United Nations and within the context of the Bretton Woods institutions. We reiterate our call for the reform of the international financial institutions towards increased transparency and accountability, and an increased role for the developing countries in decision-making.

We welcome the increased attention that the Group of Twenty (G-20) has paid to development issues and are encouraged by the consultative approach in its relations with the United Nations. It is imperative that the G-20's activities in respect of development accord with the central role of the United Nations in economic development.

The Doha Development Round of trade negotiations, which began in good faith nearly a decade ago, has the potential to significantly improve the development prospects of most developing countries. We therefore urge the full re-engagement of all parties in the process, so that we might move beyond the current impasse and usher in a new era of multilateral trade relations. This must take into account the preservation of policy space and flexibility for developing countries in areas that are integral to our ability to build competitiveness and trade capacity. We remain hopeful that at the eighth Ministerial

Conference, to be held in December, we will consider a package of measures as the basis for a more balanced trade regime that will serve as a catalyst for increased economic growth and prosperity worldwide. We must commit to ensuring that development remains a central objective of the negotiations.

We support coordinated and collaborative efforts within the context of the review and implementation of the Aid for Trade Initiative in support of developing countries. We will continue to work with our international partners and aid and development entities in expanding the Initiative to build on the supply-side capacity and infrastructure of developing countries, so that we can take advantage of trade opportunities and connections within the global economy.

Jamaica has embarked on an export-led trade policy with the full involvement of the business sector within the context of the World Trade Organization Trade Policy Review institutional framework. The strategic formulation of our trade policy process includes collaboration with the private sector particularly given its central role and expertise in manufacturing and exporting. Our success in trade development is strongly dependent on partnerships with the private sector as we agree to policy directives and pursue an export-led trade initiative, while being mindful of our resources and capacity to export, as well as business opportunities and market intelligence globally.

Other critical challenges such as food security, energy security, climate change, poverty and diseases, continue to demand the attention of the international community. Precisely because of their transnational character, many of these problems require multilateral cooperation and action in an inclusive framework that involves both developed and developing countries.

A year ago, world leaders gathered at the General Assembly to take stock of the progress made towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We renewed our commitments to achieving those targets by 2015. We acknowledge the support and partnership in the midst of the global economic challenges. Nonetheless, with four years left until the 2015 deadline, we are deeply concerned at the slow pace of delivery on commitments made in several key areas, namely, ODA, trade, debt relief and access to new technologies and affordable essential medicines.

Jamaica renews the appeal made by our Prime Minister at the summit last year for an emergency programme to re-energize the MDG agenda. Without such a programme, those targets will remain elusive in 2015 and beyond. The fiscal policy requirements attached to the resources made available for developing countries through institutions like the International Monetary Fund cannot assist in meeting the MDG targets in the short run. It is therefore critical that we reinvigorate the Global Partnership for Development aligned with MDG 8. Critical also must be the channelling of resources and the fiscal space to support programmes for economic empowerment and capacity building. More concessionary loans and grants and debt-for-equity swaps should be among the instruments used.

Jamaica is on track to meet most of the MDGs despite the economic and financial challenges. Through assistance from the Global Fund, we have significantly increased access to antiretroviral drugs and reduced the rates of HIV/AIDS infection, mother-to-child transmission and AIDS mortality. At the High-level Meeting on AIDS held in June, Member States committed to bold new targets for the AIDS response, including scaling up investments. As a result of its reclassification as an upper-middle-income country, Jamaica will not be eligible to access those funds. This puts us at risk of reversing the gains made in halting the spread of HIV. We again urge that the factors used by the relevant multilateral agencies in the measurement of a country's wealth be reviewed, as their classifications often bear no resemblance to the realities on the ground. They must more carefully take into account a country's indebtedness and capacity to pay, as well as its fiscal capacity to finance programmes that are taken for granted in respect of middle-income countries.

We are pleased that the international community embraced the proposal made by the Caribbean Community for United Nations emphasis on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the silent killer of millions around the world. The High-level Meeting on NCDs last week allowed us for the first time to agree to measures to significantly reduce NCDs. The political declaration we adopted (resolution 66/2, annex), while not as ambitious as Jamaica would have preferred, provides a good basis to address the prevention and control of NCDs. We urge the United Nations system and Member States to expeditiously implement

measures to achieve the agreed targets and indicators on NCDs.

The famine in the Horn of Africa, precipitated by the worst drought in half a century, is of grave concern to us all. It has heightened our awareness of the devastating impact of natural disasters on poor developing countries. We must adopt more concrete measures on food security, building on the progress made from the World Summit on Food Security and working closely with the World Food Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to strengthen international humanitarian response and assistance, particularly in areas that are prone to disasters and conflicts. The plight of starving populations, including mothers and infants in the region, must push us towards the commitments of the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

To sustain the global food market and feed our populations, we have to engage in greater investments in science and research to boost agricultural production — especially in poor rural communities — as well as to offset the effect of drought and famine. We equally have to increase investment in transport and agricultural infrastructure to facilitate the storage of food, its marketing and packaging and its transportation to marketplaces.

Speculative action in the global market, with the attendant volatility in commodity prices, has generated socio-economic tensions in various countries across the globe. The constant increases in food prices not only create further strain on the economy and on social welfare, but also threaten food security and deepen the economic challenges of countries that are already striving to recover from the global financial crisis. Jamaica therefore welcomes the initiative launched by President Sarkozy of France for the G-20 to give serious consideration to this question of financial speculation in the prices of petroleum and food at the summit to be held in November. This is a burgeoning crisis, which the United Nations must also take seriously.

Climate change presents a clear and present danger to human development, particularly in small island developing States and least developed States. Progress was made at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancún last December, when common ground was reached between developed and developing countries on several key issues. We must now implement and operationalize those decisions. We remain disappointed at the slow pace of climate change financing.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban in December will provide yet another opportunity to forge consensus on effective adaptation and mitigation strategies within the context of an ambitious post-2012 climate change framework. A second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol is essential, and we remain optimistic that at Durban we will all demonstrate the necessary political will and seriousness of purpose to achieve that.

At the United Nations we share a common background in the 1983 World Commission on Environment and Development and the 1987 report "Our Common Future" (A/42/427, annex). We share an awareness that the nations of the world are interdependent, experience interlocking crises and have a common but differently shaded responsibility. We have agreed on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. We share the conviction that inequality, poverty and the environment and environmental degradation are linked and that development and the environment are inseparable. In the light of that background, we urge a renewed commitment to the pursuit of development that is sustainable, through increased attention to all three pillars of sustainable development — the environmental, the socio-political and the economic — and a redoubling of efforts to integrate sustainable development principles at the international, regional and, most important, national levels, and

> "meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (*A/42/427, annex, conclusion, para. 1*)

As a small island developing State, we have a vested interest in the successful outcome of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to review the implementation of the commitments made 20 years ago at the Conference in Rio de Janeiro. States and regions are already assessing the progress that we have made and the gaps that persist in our efforts to chart a more sustainable course to development in the period since the 1992 Conference. Significant gaps that cause

concern relate to the transfer of technology, capacity-building and the provision of additional financial resources for development.

In our efforts to strengthen the international sustainable development architecture, the emphasis should be on effectiveness, on the efficacy of institutions that not only facilitate extensive policy discussions, but that also move us towards fulfilment of the ambitious vision that we all embraced in Rio in 1992. We should also aim for institutional flexibility, which will allow us to address long-standing and emerging challenges through increased cooperation and coordination.

Rio+20 will provide us with an excellent opportunity to renew our commitment to Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and, in respect of the small island developing States, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy on its implementation.

As host to the International Seabed Authority, Jamaica attaches great importance to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. Next year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, drawn up in Montego Bay. We encourage Member States to appropriately highlight that landmark event at the international level.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains an important goal for the international community. While we have taken significant steps towards achieving that goal, significant challenges remain. A number of key players remain outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has still not entered into force. As we look towards the start of the preparatory process for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, there must be unquestionable political will to address those lingering deficiencies in our push to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

We must continue to build on the momentum gained from last year's special high-level meeting of the General Assembly on transnational organized crime, which addressed measures to counter the growing problem, including narco-trafficking and the illicit trade in small arms and ammunition.

Jamaica, like its partners in the Caribbean Community, continues to face severe threats to our long-term socio-economic development from illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, small arms and light weapons and ammunition. We will remain resolute in our fight against this menace both locally and abroad. We have achieved marked reductions in crime and criminal activities over the past year with our multifaceted strategy to stem the problems, as well as through the implementation of social intervention and social transformation initiatives to stem the problem of crime and violence. We continue to strengthen the capacity of our security forces and to improve our justice system, to ensure that criminals are caught and prosecuted in a court of law.

We firmly believe, however, that we will not see the full impact of those efforts without an international regime that regulates the sale and transfer of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. To that end, Jamaica is committed to ensuring that the 2012 Diplomatic Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty results in a legally binding, comprehensive, objective and transparent Treaty.

In order for the United Nations to deliver on all our expectations, its organizational structure must reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. An effective response to global challenges requires a reformed and dynamic United Nations. Reform initiatives, spanning a number of years, have led to the establishment of UN-Women, the reform and strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, a more coordinated and efficient response to humanitarian crises and a change in the way we conduct our peacekeeping missions. We must continue our efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly so that it can effectively carry out its role and responsibility as the chief deliberative and policymaking organ of the United Nations.

A glaring failure has been our inability to agree on reform of the Security Council to ensure that it is more democratic, responsive and reflective of today's political environment. For more than 15 years, the debates for comprehensive and lasting reform of the Council have achieved very little. The African countries and our Latin American and Caribbean region still have no permanent seat at the table. That injustice cannot continue. Comprehensive reform can only be achieved within the intergovernmental negotiating process. Anything less will be nothing more than a continuation of the status quo.

As we continue to work together to achieve sustainable development for all, it is imperative that we exercise the requisite political will and make good on our commitments to the global development agenda. The far-reaching effects of the multiple and interconnected crises of recent years have reinforced our interdependence and the important role of economic cooperation and partnerships in securing global peace and prosperity.

We must redouble our efforts to address the growing challenges of poverty, food insecurity, the rising costs of food and energy, and climate change. It is not good enough to engage in extensive deliberations, to make commitments and issue declarations without providing the means for their implementation, including financing, capacity-building and technology transfer. We must now go beyond grand statements if we are to fully realize sustainable development and rekindle the faith of the people we serve in the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Theodore Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Symonette (Bahamas): On behalf of the people and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I also extend gratitude to his predecessor for his stewardship of the Assembly during its sixty-fifth session, and I would also like to extend congratulations to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his re-election as Secretary-General.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome the Republic of South Sudan as the 193rd State Member of the United Nations and to convey the best wishes of my Government and people for its peace and prosperity.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I wish to express regret at the loss of life and the tremendous and wide-ranging destruction caused by hurricanes and tropical storms during the summer season. The Bahamas, as well as a number of Caribbean islands and, indeed, the East Coast of the United States, were particularly hard-hit by Hurricane Irene. The devastation caused by each of those storms reinforces the need for global attention to the adverse impacts of climate change and natural disasters. The storms' trail of destruction, which took lives, flattened homes and businesses, toppled trees and spread debris across roadways and bridges, and which, in some cases, caused almost certain irreversible damage to coastal areas and ecosystems, compels, we believe, the international community to take immediate measures to address climatic phenomena which cause such huge losses and which threaten so many countries.

For us, the increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters, including hurricanes, some due to the effects of climate change, are among the major challenges faced at the national level. Other environmental challenges, including waste and water-resource management issues, together with economic and social challenges, all constitute serious constraints for the Bahamas.

We are committed to mainstreaming sustainable development principles into our national development strategies. Progress is being made in the key areas of protecting our biodiversity and supporting the development of policies promoting renewable energy. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with international partners so as to achieve even greater success in the years ahead. In this vein, the Bahamas looks forward to next year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. We fully expect that the Conference will take into account unmet needs in connection with each of the three pillars of sustainable development, that is, economic, social and environmental.

We face an increasingly complex set of global challenges, which has given rise to an equally complex network of formal and informal global institutions and mechanisms designed to enhance collective action to address these challenges. Consequently, the question of international governance as it relates to the global agenda has become a pressing issue in recent years.

The global economic crisis of the past three years has underscored the need for more effective global governance, as has the long and sometimes controversial debate on reform of the Security Council. Arguably, at the heart of all of these issues, particularly for some small developing States such as the Bahamas, is the need to ensure that our global systems are able to effectively respond to evolving global challenges in an inclusive, participatory and transparent manner.

With respect to international economic governance, the Bahamas is acutely aware of the growing role of the Group of 20 (G-20) and the need to address how the Group would be better able to engage and consult a wider range of countries, as well as the United Nations as a whole, with a view to helping to translate G-20 deliberations into effective actions on a global scale. Fortunately, the work of the Global Governance Group has been largely successful in this regard. Indeed, the Bahamas joined the Group with the understanding that the United Nations has a central role in global economic governance and that serious engagement with the G-20 would allow for a clearer understanding of their respective strengths and comparative advantages.

Reform of the Security Council is no more a reality today than it was a year ago, or even 10 years ago. This remains, however, an important goal, as it stands as a harbinger of success for other equally pressing global governance activities that will inevitably affect each and every country regardless of its size, economic or political power. The aspirations of the marginalized for greater democratization, inclusiveness, representativeness, transparency and accountability are no less legitimate at the international level than they are at the national or local levels. If the Council is to fully fulfil its responsibility for international peace and security, it must reflect the geopolitical realities of our world in its composition as well as in its modus operandi. The Bahamas therefore continues to support Security Council expansion in both categories and the reform of its working methods.

The Bahamas believes that the main strength of the United Nations is its inclusiveness, as it is perhaps the only global body with unquestionable legitimacy. Hence, we envision a greater role for the United Nations in a number of areas, not in order to duplicate work done elsewhere, but to help in other areas of critical importance to small developing countries, including international cooperation in tax matters.

The Bahamas, along with many Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, continues to seek the conversion of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation on Tax Matters into an intergovernmental subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, the central goal being to give small developing countries an effective voice when issues of cooperation on tax matters are being decided by the international community. Likewise, we recommend a greater role for the United Nations in the areas of international financial regulation and credit-rating systems.

As regards the global economic and financial crisis, it is important to note that many small middle-income and ostensibly high-income developing States such as the Bahamas continue to grapple with lingering effects, including serious credit and employment challenges — challenges that persist owing mainly to indebtedness; non-concessionary status with respect to access to resources of the international financial institutions; and an increasing rate of erosion of preferential access to the markets of major development partners.

The Bahamas continues to develop national initiatives to address these and other related matters. We have seen some success in maintaining a sustainable of Government debt to gross domestic product ratio; implementing measures to provide relief and assistance to Bahamians; and efforts to modernize and expand our public infrastructure as well as increase investment in our least developed islands.

These national efforts must be met with appropriate and urgent actions at the international level in order to effectively respond to these challenges, as well as to help sustain progress in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Such actions at the international level must include the provision of new and additional resources to assist developing countries, in particular the most vulnerable among us, as well as the development of the necessary implementation mechanisms.

In that connection, the Bahamas wishes to underline the importance of implementing the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development. The Bahamas also wishes to highlight in this regard the critical role that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system can play in stimulating economic growth and development in developing countries.

Migration can be, and has been, a positive force for development internationally. Indeed, immigrants have contributed to the development of the Bahamas in many respects, largely through contributions to education, health care and to the development of our tourism and financial services. Uncontrolled migration,

however, has also proved, and continues to be, a serious challenge to sustainable development. In this context, the Bahamas welcomes increased dialogue on improving international cooperation with respect to international migration and development. We believe that proper cooperation can help to ensure that migration occurs through safe and regulated channels, to the benefit of both migrant and receiving States, like the Bahamas. The Bahamas will continue to participate constructively in the process leading to the second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held by the General Assembly in 2013, with a view to addressing these and other related issues.

The Bahamas congratulates the people of Haiti on the election and installation of a democratically elected President and Government. We are heartened by the peaceful and successful manner in which the second round of elections was concluded in Haiti. Political stability is fundamental to Haiti's economic and social development. We hope that the issue of the appointment of a new Prime Minister will be resolved in the shortest possible time so that the Haitian people can continue to recover from last year's devastating earthquake and reconstruct their country with a view to its sustained and sustainable development.

My delegation continues to commend the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Over the years, MINUSTAH has played a key role in helping to lay the foundation for long-term recovery and stability in Haiti, with its support activities for State institutions and the rehabilitation and training of the Haitian National Police. MINUSTAH's role and functions should reflect the country's development needs, as articulated by the Government. The support and engagement of the international community in Haiti is as pressing and urgent as ever, and MINUSTAH must continue to be an important factor in this regard.

The issue of international peace and security remains a critical concern for the Organization, as it does for the entire global community. The Bahamas unequivocally condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterates its commitment to the fight against it. The terror attacks of 11 September, the heinous attacks in Mumbai and Norway and at the United Nations headquarters in Nigeria demonstrate that our efforts thus far have proved insufficient; hence the urgency of our task.

In an archipelago spread over some 100,000 square miles, the porous borders of the Bahamas have, for many years, posed a challenge to national security as well as the rule of law. We are currently confronted by high levels of crime, too many of which involve the use of small arms and light weapons. We are keenly aware of the global threats posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which is linked to other aspects of transnational organized crime, including the illicit drug trade.

The Bahamas, both nationally and internationally, is acting to reduce the threats that these criminal elements pose to our society. Nationally, we are continuing a programme of reform of our criminal laws, modernizing and expanding our court system and strengthening targeted programmes designed to address social ills. Regionally, we are working with other CARICOM nations to undertake a number of measures to combat these challenges. Internationally, the Bahamas is committed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Regulation of the import, export and transfer of conventional arms is critical if we are to achieve some measure of peace and stability and reduce conflicts. The Bahamas supports a strong, effective and non-discriminatory arms trade treaty and welcomes the inclusion of the category of small arms and light weapons and ammunition within the scope of a future treaty. What is clearly evident is the need for an integrated global response to supplement actions at the national, regional and subregional levels if we are to effectively prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and thus reduce the escalating violence and crime in our societies.

The Government of the Bahamas continues to be committed to the 2001 and 2006 Declarations on HIV/AIDS (resolutions S-26/2 and 60/262). Our programme, now in its twenty-fifth year, has been very successful. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our regional, hemispheric and international partners for their support.

My Government is also dealing with the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which pose an increasing threat to countries like the Bahamas and others of the CARICOM subregion. As our Prime Minister said in his national

address here last week (see A/66/PV.3), the health and socio-economic costs required for Governments to treat NCDs are indeed enormous. The Bahamas and its fellow CARICOM countries welcome last week's High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, and applaud the international community's attention to NCDs. We trust that the adoption of the Political Declaration (resolution 66/2, annex), while it is not as action-oriented as we envisaged when we undertook the mandate from our heads of Government four years ago, will produce results. We would have preferred the text to have reflected stronger commitments and specific, time-bound targets for addressing non-communicable diseases and their risk factors. We look forward, however, to a comprehensive review of this issue in 2014.

With the world community witnessing an unprecedented wave in the call for social change and democracy across countries in the Arab world and in North Africa, we must ensure, in our desire to promote good and effective governance, that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the promotion of civil and political rights and the right to development, forms the basis of any long-term solution. My Government's commitment to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms is unwavering.

This year we celebrate some significant achievements on the international human rights agenda: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development (resolution 41/128) and, more recently, the tenth anniversary, this week, of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. This year, we are also observing the International Year for People of African Descent.

In spite of the objectives of these laudable initiatives for the advancement of the international human rights agenda and recent undertakings such as the reform of the Human Rights Council, we are still confronted with persistent poverty and stark inequalities, both within and across countries — racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance, some 63 years after the landmark adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (resolution 217 (III)). These challenges serve as a constant reminder that we have much more to do to improve the lives of millions of disadvantaged and marginalized populations throughout the world. While it is advantageous to adopt declarations and renew commitments, it is more important to ensure their effective implementation at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations must therefore continue to reflect the ideals of its founding principles and unite us through a common vision of peace, mutual respect and human rights for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Desalegn (Ethiopia): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the President on his election to lead the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I wish to assure him of the full cooperation of my delegation in successfully discharging his high responsibilities. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor for his excellent stewardship of the Assembly's previous session. And allow me to take this opportunity to once again congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment to a second term, and to express our admiration for work well done during his first term.

It is with a great sense of brotherhood that I warmly welcome the Republic of South Sudan to the family of our global Organization and offer our sincere congratulations and best wishes to the newest Member State. We also welcome the Libyan delegation, which we recognized some time ago. We are not oblivious to the Herculean challenge that they face.

The globalizing world has always presented challenges to Africa and the developing world. However, the negative developments over the past few years, which appear to be far from being mitigated, have made it even more difficult for countries such as ours to move ahead on the path to development as fast as we would have liked and our potential and commitment would have allowed. There is a need for a redoubled effort so that the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals are not frustrated. That was also the hope of the fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. For our part, we feel that we have been on track for almost all the targets, and our commitment is to be even more ambitious, in line with our five-year Growth and Transformation Plan. Nevertheless, the global economic situation is a source of concern.

Within that global context, the Horn of Africa has been hit by the worst adverse climatic conditions in 60 years, causing a very tragic drought situation. At this critical juncture, the international community should be galvanized, particularly in helping to alleviate the crises in Somalia. The call made on Saturday at the mini-summit on that issue needs to be reiterated and amplified. We should do more for the people of Somalia and those others in the region who have been affected by the calamity.

Even more crucial in the Horn of Africa is sustainable development. Our youth need to have their hopes for the future not frustrated, and the condition of our women and children requires much greater attention. On top of denying people their human rights, poverty is not a solid foundation on which peace and security can be built. That need compels us to draw attention to a number of challenges that we, in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, face, particularly with respect to climate change. The adverse consequences of climate change are becoming evident in various ways. The challenges are global, requiring global solutions, on the basis of common but differentiated responsibility. We do not believe that enough is being done commensurate with the gravity of the threat to humanity in general. Moreover, the whole issue embodies injustice because Africa and the developing world happen to be the worst affected, while contributing the least to climate change.

As members of IGAD, we have for some time tried to bring our collective effort to bear on the various challenges the Horn of Africa faces. Realizing the fact that one of the major factors hindering development in our region is related to security and the lack of durable stability, apart from doing our best to lay the bases for the integration of our subregion through various infrastructure-related projects, we have continued to strengthen our common endeavour for peace and security in the IGAD region.

The positive outcomes are there to be seen. No regional group has been as closely identified with peacemaking in the Sudan as IGAD. In Somalia, in close collaboration with the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations, IGAD has been the lynchpin in the effort to assist the people of Somalia in achieving peace, stability and national reconciliation. Now, with the extremists and Al-Shabaab having been driven out of Mogadishu and the tide turning against them, there is new hope in Somalia, which should be sustained. The Kampala Accord laid the basis for a breakthrough in Somalia, for which we owe gratitude to President Yoweri Museveni and Ambassador Mahiga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to Uganda and Burundi for the sacrifices that they have made, and continue to make, as the two countries that spearheaded the efforts of the African Union Mission and the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia to keep those such as Al-Shabaab and their supporters at bay. It must be underlined that it is a fight that has humanitarian and development implications, not only security or political. That is why the successful cooperation of the IGAD countries for stability and security in the Horn of Africa, and in the fight against terrorism and extremism, has been so vital. It requires the wholehearted support of the international community, the General Assembly and, most particularly, the Security Council.

I need not go into the details of what the IGAD countries have requested of the Security Council in terms of support for them to succeed in the effort that they are making for peace in Somalia and to contain those who not only encourage, but also take part in carrying out terrorism. It is particularly vital for the Council to act on the conclusions and recommendations of a body established by the Council itself. Sweet talk, devoid of any behavioural change in practice and on the ground, should not lead the Security Council to wish away concrete evidence presented to it by a committee of its own creation.

Let us admit that there are double standards in the fight against terrorism. Our counter-terrorism effort cannot succeed if we are selective in that struggle. The Prime Minister of India could not have been more correct when he said from this rostrum last Saturday:

> "There cannot be selective approaches in dealing with terrorist groups or the infrastructure of terrorism. Terrorism has to be fought across all fronts." (*A/66/PV.22*)

We in Ethiopia have never had a short-sighted perspective on what we need to do to ensure that our national interest and our national security are protected. In this day and age, it is only through collective effort that we can ensure peace, security and stability. Some might imagine that they would benefit

by encouraging discord in their neighbourhood. The Horn of Africa has suffered because of policies emanating from that kind of mindset for too long. That should be combated. We seek the support of all fair-minded people in that endeavour.

For our part, we have been guided by the objective of protecting and defending the collective security interest of the people of our region. That has guided our policy in the Sudan and in the effort that we have been making to nurture mutual confidence between us and both the Republic of Sudan and the new nation of South Sudan. We have also followed that signpost in conducting our policy with respect to Somalia.

Ethiopia is not a newcomer to international diplomacy. As a founding member of the United Nations, we take our responsibility as members of the human family seriously. We view our vocation to be a factor for strengthening international peace and security and for enhancing friendly relations among nations, large or small, on the basis of full equality. That is why, as we continue to call for the reform of the Security Council, we also remain committed to the revitalization of the General Assembly, the true representative of the people of the world in the true spirit of the United Nations Charter, whose very first phrase is: "We the peoples of the United Nations".

In that same spirit, Ethiopia wants to express its position on the historic turning point that the people of Palestine and the people of Israel are passing through and the challenges that they are facing. We are convinced that no great wisdom is required to realize that, at the end of the day, it is only through peaceful negotiation and mutual accommodation that the two parties can reach the final destination.

In that regard, it is not enough that the right of the Palestinians to a viable State of their own be acknowledged and be paid lip service. It is also necessary that real, tangible and practical steps be taken, and in good time, towards the realization of that objective. That has not been done. No doubt, that is partly the explanation for where we are today and at this moment. On the other hand, while it is self-defeating, and also unjust, to use it as a pretext for delaying the realization of the dreams of the people of Palestine, nonetheless, it is neither proper nor realistic to underestimate and belittle the security concerns of Israel.

When the time comes for us to pronounce ourselves on this signature issue of the sixty-sixth session of the Assembly, the position we take will be based on our objective assessment of all dimensions of the issue in good faith and in line with what we believe is dictated by the cause of justice and sustainable peace.

We are passing through a period not only of uncertainty, but also of great historic and momentous change. The world that emerged from the Second World War is almost no more. Periods such as this need to be handled delicately. That is why it is so critical that more attention be paid to the need for preventing conflicts and for mediation. We are pleased that the President Al-Nasser has made this one of his top priorities. We want to assure him that he can expect the full cooperation of the IGAD countries.

Let me conclude by asking for the support of all Member States for the draft resolution that the IGAD countries will be submitting requesting observer status for IGAD at the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Primer Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Sisoulith (*spoke in Lao; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): The reappointment of Mr. Ban Ki-moon as Secretary-General is testimony to his able leadership and great achievements in guiding the universal Organization over the past five years. I take this opportunity once again, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, to express to him my sincere congratulations and to wish him great success in the discharge of his noble duty, especially as we seek to overcome ongoing multiple crises and challenges.

In the same vein, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is pleased to work closely with all the States Members of the United Nations at this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly under the presidency of Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, a veteran diplomat with extensive experience in international affairs and diplomacy. I also commend Mr. Joseph Deiss on his success as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

Like other delegations, I welcome South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the United Nations.

The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has always stood firm in upholding the peaceful settlement of disputes and in preserving international peace and security in view of creating an environment conducive to the promotion of development cooperation. In this connection, in recent decades the Lao Government has continued to pursue a consistent foreign policy of peace, independence, friendship and cooperation aimed at ensuring tangible benefits for the Lao people, thus contributing to maintaining regional and international peace and security. This policy direction was reaffirmed at the Ninth Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party held in March. By pursuing this policy in response to external challenges, over the past decades the Lao People's Democratic Republic has firmly upheld and maintained political stability and social order, thereby laying a solid foundation for continued economic development and social progress. As a result, we have achieved considerable progress in social advancement and poverty reduction.

For the next five years, the Government has identified immediate and medium-term targets to accelerate economic development in all aspects so as to build a strong basis for the implementation of the national strategy to transform the country into an industrialized and modernized nation and achieve the ultimate goal for graduating from least developed country status by 2020.

In this globalizing and integrated world, all nations big and small, rich and poor, have become more interdependent than ever. None of us can survive in isolation from the international community. Although the Lao People's Democratic Republic has in the past recorded satisfactory achievements in its national socio-economic development endeavour, the country will continue to confront daunting challenges. As a small, least developed nation, the country has been vulnerable to external shocks. Therefore, it shares with other countries the desire to reside in a peaceful and secured world.

That being said, all nations must continue to enhance development cooperation, to ensure tangible benefits for their peoples based on mutual respect, solidarity, understanding and assistance, and avoid the use of threat, interference and force. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that we have faced multiple challenges over the past year caused by regional conflicts, and spreading social unrest, coupled with financial and economic crisis and devastating natural disasters, which have become more frequent. All this has posed severe threats to global peace, stability, security and development cooperation.

Against this backdrop, these multiple challenges are not only obstructing developing countries, the least developed in particular, in pursuing their national development efforts and achieving the international development goals, but are also further reversing development.

In such circumstances, we believe that the United Nations, as the only universal Organization, should further enhance its role in order to address the challenges in a more timely and just manner in response to the common aspirations of all Member States. Towards this end, we must accelerate the United Nations reform process, which has been pending for years, to achieve a more concrete outcome. It is more critical than ever for all Member States to enhance our cooperation in a sincere and trustworthy manner, without taking advantage of one another, in the effort to reform the United Nations bodies and improve their effectiveness.

Security and political stability remain critical to advancing the socio-economic development of all regions. The United Nations should therefore play a more critical role in maintaining international peace and security by effectively carrying out its duty to address regional conflicts, especially with regard to the situation in the Middle East, which has gone unresolved for decades. Against this backdrop, the United Nations should play a more effective facilitating role in urging all parties concerned to find a solution and realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and within internationally recognized borders, as stipulated in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. In this regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic supports Palestine's application on 23 September for full membership in the United Nations.

Another important concern remains the issue of the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on Cuba for several decades, which has seriously affected the Cuban people. We believe that it is now time for that embargo to be lifted unconditionally.

Peace and security in South-East Asia have contributed to creating an environment conducive to the socio-economic advancement of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). At present, ASEAN is continuing its efforts to accelerate community-building by 2015 based on three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Indeed, we have made steady progress in our common endeavour.

In its community-building efforts, ASEAN aims to implement free trade areas among its 10 member countries, as well as between ASEAN and its dialogue partners. In the same vein, our organization has further strengthened its external cooperation by maintaining ASEAN centrality in all ASEAN-initiated frameworks, such as ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus and the East Asia Summit. In addition, ASEAN has started to discuss its long-term vision and role beyond the year 2015. All of this has contributed to maintaining peace, stability and development cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region and in the world at large.

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is another important mechanism for facilitating international cooperation. Over the past 15 years, ASEM has developed remarkably and become an important forum for leaders to consider measures to respond to emerging regional and global challenges. In that context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is honoured that ASEAN member countries have entrusted it with hosting the ninth ASEM Summit, to be held early in November 2012 in Vientiane, its capital. The Lao Government has made the preparations for the Summit a top priority. In that regard, I take this opportunity to invite the leaders of ASEM member countries to attend the Summit. It will provide an excellent opportunity for leaders from the two regions to discuss important issues related to promoting peace and enhancing effective cooperation among the countries of Asia and Europe in this new era.

Socio-economic development in a country that has suffered the consequences and legacy of war has never been easy. One of the main obstacles and hindrances to our efforts to advance socio-economic development is unexploded ordnance, which continues to have an extensive and serious negative impact on the livelihoods of the Lao people, both directly and indirectly. The Lao Government has made every effort and mobilized financial means to clear the contaminated areas, particularly agricultural and inhabitable lands across the country, as well as to raise public awareness and help victims to reintegrate into society.

In discharging its duties as President of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Conference on Cluster Munitions, over the past year the Lao People's Democratic Republic has received invaluable support and assistance from the international community, including States parties and non-State parties, international organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations. All have contributed to the early implementation of this humanitarian Convention.

On that note, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, as well as on my own behalf, I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to all countries and international organizations for their support and assistance. These were clearly reflected in the broad participation in the First Meeting of States Parties, which was hosted by the Lao People's Democratic Republic in November 2010. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate those countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention. The number of States parties to the Convention has now increased to 63. I hope that other countries that are not yet States parties will consider acceding to it in the near future.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is more crucial than ever that the international community seize the opportunity to fulfil its obligation to promote and enhance cooperation as a means of addressing pressing challenges, which no country can do on its own. Against that backdrop, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its consistent determination to work closely with the international community, thereby helping to make this world a peaceful, equal and just place, free of fear and deprivation. I am convinced that close cooperation and mutual assistance will enable us all to achieve our common goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Yang Jiechi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to begin by congratulating Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on having assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I am confident that, with his outstanding ability and great experience, he will fulfil his lofty mission. I also wish to thank Mr. Deiss for his contribution as President at the previous session. I further wish to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the Republic of South Sudan on becoming the 193rd member of the United Nations family.

The first decade of the twenty-first century is now behind us. During that decade, the trend towards a multipolar world and economic globalization gained momentum. Countries became increasingly interdependent. Revolutions in science and technology brought profound transformations to human society. However, various traditional and non-traditional security threats and global challenges were intertwined with those changes, and the world was far from a peaceful place.

As the second decade of the new century begins, the world has entered an extraordinary historical stage in its pursuit of peace and development, and continues to undergo profound and complex changes. Uncertainty and instability are increasing despite the generally peaceful international environment. Development is becoming an increasingly serious issue, and promoting common development has become a more important and pressing task than ever before.

Global development is now at a new critical juncture. Global recovery remains fragile, international financial markets are volatile and the pursuit of sustainable development faces daunting challenges. The world economy therefore has to meet the crucial test of maintaining growth. Some countries in West Asia and North Africa are in continual political turmoil. Terrorist threats are spreading and global challenges growing. The international community faces a critical test in maintaining stability.

The gap in development between the South and the North is as wide as ever. The number of people living in absolute poverty has increased by 64 million owing to the international financial crisis. Nearly 1 billion people suffer from starvation. Urgent action is needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is imperative to step up international cooperation to help the least developed countries (LDCs) meet the basic needs of their people. In the face of these challenges, we share an important mission to achieve common development, and we also have rare new opportunities.

Economic globalization has made the interests of countries more closely interconnected. Ensuring security through cooperation and promoting development through stability has become our shared desire. Countries are addressing development challenges in innovative ways. To overcome the crisis, developed countries have taken steps to improve their fiscal conditions, adopted stimulus measures and accelerated economic structural adjustment. Developing countries as a whole have maintained good growth momentum. In particular, the rapid growth in some emerging economies has driven the growth of the world economy.

Progress has been made in the reform of the global economic governance structure, and various regional cooperation mechanisms are expanding. Efforts to accelerate the development of a green economy and explore new modes of sustainable growth have created new momentum and space for common development. Faced with new opportunities and challenges, we should work as a team to overcome our difficulties and pursue mutual benefit and common development. This is the responsibility and mission that history bestows upon all of us. To fulfil our mission, we need to take the following steps.

We should foster sound momentum for global economic recovery. The underlying impact of the international financial crisis has yet to dissipate, and economic recovery is still fragile and uneven. We should intensify consultation and coordination, and send a strong message of solidarity and win-win cooperation so as to strengthen international confidence in global recovery and growth. We should work for a fair, just, inclusive and orderly international monetary and financial system, and promote the voice and representation of emerging markets and developing countries.

China supports the transition of the Group of 20 (G-20) from a short-term crisis response mechanism to a long-term mechanism of economic governance. The G-20 should play a bigger role in global economic governance and in promoting the full recovery and growth of the world economy.

We support the efforts of emerging markets to explore new modes of international economic cooperation. We strongly oppose protectionism in all its forms and call for strengthening the multilateral trading regime. The concerns of the least developed countries should be addressed, and efforts made to make the Doha Round achieve its development objectives.

We should lay the political foundation for cooperative development. All countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal members of the international community, and their equal right to development should be protected. Mutual respect and equality are the basic norms governing international relations and constitute an important guarantee for common development. In the current context, it is of particular and practical importance to adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to uphold the authority and role of the United Nations, to observe in good faith the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and to promote democracy in international relations.

We should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. The internal affairs of each country should be decided by its own people. We oppose interference in other countries' internal affairs by whatever means and under whatever pretext.

The diversity of the world is a valuable asset for the development of human society. It should be seen as a positive factor that allows countries to learn from one another, and should not be used as an excuse for the big to bully the small or the rich to ride roughshod over the poor in international relations. We should respect the right of each country to pursue the development path of its choice and we should respect the diversity of civilizations. We should seek common progress by drawing on one another's strength with an open and inclusive mind, pursuing common ground while preserving differences.

We should foster a security environment conducive to stability and development. History has repeatedly shown that stability and development go hand in hand. Without stability, there can be no development; without development, there can be no stability. In keeping with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, we should always use peaceful means to settle international disputes and hotspot issues. We should oppose the wilful use or threat of force, terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their forms, and we should uphold the common security of humankind.

China respects the independent choice of the people of the Sudan and South Sudan, and hopes that the new-born country of South Sudan will enjoy stability and development. The international community should continue to support and encourage the Sudan and South Sudan to resolve their outstanding issues appropriately through dialogue and consultation, pursue amicable relations and common development, and uphold regional peace and stability. China has encouraged the Sudan and South Sudan to resolve their dispute through peaceful negotiation and has worked hard to advance the peace process between them. We support the proper settlement of the Darfur issue. We will continue to work with the international community to play a constructive role in advancing regional peace, stability and development.

China has consistently supported the just cause of establishing an independent Palestinian State, and supports Palestine's membership in the United Nations. We support efforts to achieve a two-State solution through political negotiation so as to establish, on the basis of the 1967 borders, an independent Palestinian State that enjoys full sovereignty, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We believe that progress should be made in parallel in the peace talks between Syria and Israel and Lebanon and Israel, with an ultimate view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East along with peaceful coexistence between the Arab countries and Israel. We hope that the international community and the parties concerned will make unremitting efforts to this end and sustain the Middle East peace process.

China is greatly concerned about the turbulence in West Asia and North Africa. We stand for the principle of non-interference. We respect and support the efforts of countries in those regions to independently handle their internal affairs, and we respect their aspirations. We hope that the parties concerned will resolve their differences through political dialogue and speedily restore stability and order in their respective countries.

Libya has now entered a critical transition from a state of war and turmoil to national reconstruction. China respects the choice of the Libyan people and recognizes the National Transitional Council (NTC) as

the governing authority of Libya and the representative of its people. We hope that, under the leadership of the NTC, the parties in Libya will launch an inclusive process of political transition through which they will maintain ethnic harmony and national unity, restore stability as soon as possible and begin economic reconstruction. China supports the leading role of the United Nations in Libya's post-conflict reconstruction, and urges the speediest possible operationalization of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

China is also greatly concerned about developments in Syria. We hope that parties in Syria will exercise restraint, avoid all violence, further bloodshed and conflict, and act quickly to ease tensions. We believe that a Syria-led, inclusive political process aimed at promoting reform through dialogue and consultation is the right way to resolve the current crisis in Syria. The international community should respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, and address the Syrian issue cautiously so as to prevent further turbulence and repercussions on regional peace.

China welcomes the positive developments on the Korean peninsula. We believe that dialogue and consultation are the only effective way to address the issues of the peninsula. The Six-Party Talks are an effective mechanism for advancing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and for upholding peace and stability both on the peninsula and in North-East Asia.

China has worked hard to promote peace through dialogue, and has played a unique role in easing tensions and maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. China welcomes the recent resumption of dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, as well as between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. We hope that the parties concerned will seize the opportunity, remain engaged in dialogue and work for an early resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

We should promote balanced development between the South and the North. The uneven development between South and North is the biggest imbalance in the global economy. Without balanced development, there can hardly be sustainable development. Unless underdeveloped countries shake off poverty and grow their economies, there can be no common global prosperity.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals on a global scale and on schedule is an urgent and arduous task. Developed countries should honour their commitments on official development assistance, open their markets, reduce and cancel debt, and their step up financial and technological support to developing countries. International financial institutions should use their resources to help developing countries, and particularly the LDCs, on a priority basis. Developing countries, on their part, should explore growth models that are conducive to development and poverty alleviation in order to achieve a higher level of development.

Food security has emerged as a major challenge. The Horn of Africa is suffering from massive famine triggered by the most severe drought in 60 years. The international community should scale up assistance, stabilize the price of food and other commodities, and help developing countries enhance their capacity for autonomous development so that all countries and regions can enjoy the benefits of common development.

The world witnessed major development, transformation and adjustment in the first decade of the twenty-first century. During this period, China enjoyed sustained and fast development, and its relations with the outside world underwent profound changes. China's achievements in development, and its possible future course, have become a focus of international attention. Over the past 10 years, China's economy continued to grow, and its people's living standards rose markedly, thanks to the hard work of the Chinese people. Today, China has become the world's second-largest economy, largest exporter, second-largest importer and largest emerging market. The basic living needs of China's 1.3 billion people are being adequately met, and the number living in absolute poverty has fallen drastically.

On the other hand, the difficulties China faces in terms of development should not be ignored. We remain a developing country with a large population, a weak economic foundation and serious imbalances and lack of coordination in our development. China will have to make persistent and strenuous efforts to achieve its development goals. Guided by our recently adopted twelfth five-year plan for economic and social development, we will pursue scientific development, accelerate the shift in our growth model, advance scientific and technological innovation and increase

reforms and openness designed to promote long-term, steady and fast economic development, as well as social harmony and progress. The world will see a more open China, with more sustainable development and greater social harmony.

China's development has brought real benefits to the Chinese people and contributed to global development and prosperity. During the past 10 years, China imported close to, on average, $750 billion worth of goods annually, creating more than 14 million jobs for the relevant countries and regions. At the end of the twelfth five-year period in 2015, China's total economic output will be around $8.6 trillion. It is expected that China will import about $10 trillion in goods in the next five years, which will further boost world economic growth. China needs the world in order to be able to continue to develop, and China's development will in turn contribute more to the shared development of the world as a whole.

As a developing country, China is committed to enhancing mutually beneficial cooperation with other developing countries, based on equality, and to enhancing its efforts to provide them with assistance and support. China has cancelled 380 debts incurred by 50 heavily indebted poor countries and LDCs, and will phase in zero-tariff treatment for 95 per cent of exports from the African LDCs with which China has diplomatic relations. We have completed more than 2,100 projects, including building schools and hospitals, in other developing countries, and trained 150,000 professionals in various fields for them. In sympathy with the pain of the countries and people in the Horn of Africa hit by famine, China has decided to provide those countries with RMB443.2 million in emergency food assistance and cash for purchasing food to help them overcome the famine.

China has made notable efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. As it continues to develop, China will create more opportunities for world peace, development and cooperation. To advance common development, we must foster a sound international environment. Over the years, China has been dedicated to creating a peaceful international environment in which it can develop. At the same time, it has contributed to enhancing world peace through its own development. China has actively assumed international responsibilities as its capacity permits, and has worked to promote the peaceful settlement of issues in troubled areas.

China participates actively in international peacekeeping operations; with a total of more than 19,000 personnel deployed in 28 United Nations peacekeeping missions, China is the largest contributor of United Nations peacekeeping personnel among Security Council permanent members. China has provided assistance in cash and kind to countries hit by earthquakes and tsunamis, and has sent rescue teams to carry out humanitarian relief operations in the affected areas. China is actively involved in the fight against piracy and in other areas of international cooperation. All these efforts have contributed to maintaining world peace and stability.

The tide of history is surging forward. In the next decade, peace, development and cooperation will remain trends of the times, and China will not waver in its pursuit of development and progress. Peaceful development is the strategic choice that China has made to build a modern, strong and prosperous country and to make a greater contribution to the progress of human civilization. China will stay on that path, pursuing an independent, peaceful foreign policy and a win-win strategy of opening up its society.

We are committed to achieving a better life for the Chinese people and greater development and prosperity for all humankind. We will achieve those goals through hard work, reforms and innovation, and by conducting long-term friendly exchanges and establishing equality-based, win-win cooperation with other countries. A prosperous, harmonious and stable China that lives up to its responsibilities will make a greater contribution to the prosperity and stability of the world and the common development of humankind. Let us work together to deepen cooperation and achieve development by sharing opportunities and meeting challenges together, and thus build a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Taïb Fassi Fihri, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Fassi Fihri (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great pleasure for me to extend to Mr. Al-Nasser my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. His election reflects the esteem enjoyed by the brotherly State of Qatar and the Arab world as a whole. We are

confident that his rich diplomatic experience will ensure a successful session. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his successful efforts throughout his presidency.

We also reiterate our congratulations to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment as Secretary-General. We highly value the initiatives undertaken during his first mandate, in particular the establishment of UN-Women. I also reiterate our strong support for the priorities set by the Secretary-General for his second term.

This session is taking place in a sensitive international context. The world is facing acute and complex crises, some of which are structural and persistent, including climate change and the food crisis, while others are circumstantial, such as the unprecedented financial crisis and devastating nuclear accidents. Yet others, too, have had profound impacts, such as the financial crisis that became a global economic crisis with destabilizing social and political consequences. A decade after the horrific events of 9/11, there is also the continued threat of international terrorism with its growing links to transnational organized crime in all its aspects. In addition, national and international tensions and armed conflict persist.

Such a critical situation has rarely been witnessed by the world. We are therefore called upon to reflect objectively on the following questions: What type of United Nations do we want in the face of these issues and challenges? How can we ensure that the United Nations will serve as an influential and efficient legal and political framework for the collective management of global affairs? How can we ensure the effectiveness of the Organization's bodies and organs in adapting to the fast-changing world? And finally, how do we confirm the role of the Organization as the principal axis of a multilateral system based on solidarity and coordination with new international groupings of limited membership that are endowed with the ability to promptly respond to new events?

These questions are not based on an idealistic approach but emanate from our deep belief in the highly important and unique role of the United Nations as a framework and reference for efficient and just global governance, based on solidarity, and which draws its legitimacy from its global membership and the capital it has accumulated since its establishment.

To be effective, global governance must serve as the natural extension of national, regional and subregional governance. All Member States should shoulder their responsibilities in adopting appropriate measures and actions at the national level so as to lay the foundation for and consolidate good governance.

On that basis, the Kingdom of Morocco opted several decades ago to establish a democratic State based on good governance, guaranteed individual freedoms, the dignity of its citizens and respect for human rights, while upholding the principles of equality, equal opportunity and social justice, as well as the struggle against marginalization and social exclusion. The Kingdom, through the insightful vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, has also based the establishment of a democratic and advanced society on two interdependent pillars: strengthened political reform and the realization of human development.

The recent adoption of the Kingdom's new Constitution was an historic landmark in this distinctive process and highlighted the cohesion among all components of the Moroccan nation with its multiple branches. It consolidates the principles of the separation and balance of powers while preserving the full independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. It also defines the rights and duties of citizenship and lays the foundations for political and economic governance through regulatory, mediation, representation and accountability institutions. It also strengthens women's participation in politics and social and economic development. In that context, broad regionalization enjoys a central role in the innovative constitutional architecture. It serves as the backbone of community democracy aimed at achieving development based on balance and solidarity among all regions of the Kingdom.

The Arab world is witnessing profound events and transformations that, on the one hand, highlight legitimate aspirations to freedom, dignity, progress and universal values that are shared by all regions, cultures and religions. Those events also show, on the other hand, that social and economic development cannot be achieved without political transparency and the evolution of democracy for the benefit of individuals and communities. There can be neither progress nor stability in the context of political stagnation, ideological closure, the erosion of legitimacy and the absence of any renewed or peaceful transfer of political power.

Lastly, those events have also shown that each Arab country has the capacity to build a political system that reconciles universal values and national specificities, and that combines necessary openness and the preservation of cultural and civilizational identity. In that regard, Morocco welcomes the institutional progress made by Tunisia and Egypt and calls on the international community to support the efforts of those two brotherly peoples on the complex, promising and sensitive path of democratic transition.

Morocco also expresses welcomes the delegation of the National Transitional Council of the new Libya, which aspires to a better future based on transparency, reconciliation and consolidation of the rule of law. In light of the solidarity and brotherly links between the peoples of Morocco and Libya, Morocco has from the very beginning supported the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people and the actions of the National Transitional Council at the national and international levels.

Morocco is also confident that Libya will regain its natural international position within the Maghreb countries. Moreover, Morocco hopes to see concerted Arab action to prevent further bloodshed and guarantee peaceful resolution of the crises in brotherly Syria and Yemen through the announced profound, substantive reforms and based on territorial integrity and ensured stability.

Those aspirations and changes reflect the free will of the peoples and require the effective and serious support of their Arab brothers and partners, in full respect for their national specificities, while taking into account each country's progress in the democratization process. In that context, Morocco highly appreciates the Group of Eight's response through the Deauville partnership.

Morocco believes that, in addition to its financial support, that promising partnership will act as an incentive by encouraging the five Arab beneficiary countries to rely on their own capacities to enhance economic integration, on the one hand, and to share good experiences and best practices in the field of democratization and constitutional reforms, on the other. Morocco is willing to work with its brothers in this framework based on the progress it has made in political openness and its experience in the field of democratic transition and distinctive constitutional reform.

The events and challenges in the Arab world also highlight the need for renewed regional governance based on the effective integration of harmonious and coordinated groupings, such as the Maghreb Arab Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Agadir Agreement for the Establishment of a Free Trade Zone between the Arabic Mediterranean Nations. The latter could be enlarged to include other Arab and Mediterranean countries and could extend its activities to areas of democratic reform and political dialogue. This new governance seeks, under the aegis of the Arab League, to create a new regional Arab order with innovative mechanisms and renewed foundations, to serve human development, economic integration and democratic openness, and to prevent conflicts and the danger of separatism.

It is clear that a final settlement to the Palestinian issue is a necessary factor in accelerating the pace of the ongoing Arab endeavour in the interests of all peoples of the region. The question of Palestine is today at a historical turning point. It is characterized by the absence of any prospect of negotiation, the ongoing settlement programmes, and the Israeli policy of detention, annexation, destruction and displacement, particularly in Jerusalem, as well as collective punishment and the disproportionate use of force against civilians, as reported by the United Nations in the report on the freedom flotilla.

Due to the rejection by the Israeli Government of constructive international initiatives and proposals by the sponsors of the peace process, the situation has deteriorated, and prospects have faded for the relaunch of a serious and genuine negotiating process on the final settlement, in step with reciprocal commitments. It is time for the United Nations, through its various organs and using all available mechanisms, to shoulder its full responsibility by enabling the Palestinian people, under the leadership of its National Authority, to achieve all its legitimate national rights, in harmony with efforts to strengthen the foundation of an independent Palestinian State and taking into account the momentum of international support and recognition.

Morocco has always been the first to defend the choice of peace and the brotherly Palestinian people in its struggle, and today it cautions against the stalemate in the peace process, its underlying dangers and the prevalence of the logic of force. It reiterates its support for the request of the Palestinian Authority, in the

person of President Mahmoud Abbas, for Palestine to become a full Member of the United Nations as a sovereign State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Morocco, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, will spare no effort in contributing to all constructive initiatives and supporting all actions towards the realization of that goal as soon as possible.

Moreover, our collective goal should be the revival of the peace process on the basis of clear terms of reference, a comprehensive agenda, a precise time frame, an innovative negotiating methodology, and the effective and strong involvement of the Quartet. In that regard, the Kingdom of Morocco welcomes the positive signals in the recent statement made by the Quartet.

Consistent with its vision of solidarity and integration in the Arab region, Morocco is engaged in broad consultations with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council with a view to establishing an advanced and substantive partnership in various strategic, political, economic, social, human and security fields. Morocco, which has strong ties with all members of that important regional group, wishes to establish a new model of concrete and distinctive partnership that would contribute broadly to sustainable development, stability and the containment of the threats to the security, territorial integrity and high interests of our countries. In that context, Morocco reiterates its support for the legitimate rights of the United Arab Emirates with regard to its three occupied islands.

Morocco's Maghreb, Arab, Islamic, Mediterranean and African dimensions, as well as its commitment to strengthening South-South cooperation, as enshrined in its new Constitution, contribute to the diversity of the issues on which Moroccan foreign policy is based, consistent with its aspirations to establish regional governance founded on consultation, dialogue and solidarity. Recent reforms undertaken in the Maghreb countries could give new impetus to Maghreb integration, consistent with the aspirations of the five peoples of the region and their efforts to achieve development and stability.

In that context, Morocco has worked relentlessly to activate bilateral relations with brotherly Algeria through ministerial visits, which it hopes will pave the way towards a comprehensive normalization between the two countries, including the reopening of land borders in accordance with the principle of constructive good-neighbourliness.

Inspired by the same will, Morocco reiterates its full commitment to pursuing and intensifying the negotiations to find a mutually acceptable political solution to the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara, on the basis of the Moroccan autonomy initiative that the Security Council, through six successive resolutions, has deemed to be serious and credible. This bold and realistic initiative takes into consideration, within the framework of the Kingdom's territorial integrity and sovereignty, standards of international legitimacy that go beyond unilateral restrictive interpretations that can only aggravate the status quo and lead to deadlock.

Security Council resolution 1979 (2011) renewed the emphasis on the fundamental guidelines of the negotiating process by calling for all parties to enter into substantive and serious negotiations and to show realism and a spirit of compromise to reach a midway solution, while urging neighbouring countries to fully engage in the process of negotiations. It is high time for each party to shoulder its responsibilities, particularly in the light of the events taking place in the region, with a view to working seriously and in good faith to reach a final political compromise solution to this fabricated regional dispute. There is also an urgent need to meet the aspirations of our brothers in the camps in Tindouf, Algeria, where they are denied their most basic human rights and any hope for the future.

From this rostrum, I reiterate the persistent need to achieve effective Maghreb integration in the context of the Arab Maghreb Union as an open, complementary and democratic framework to serve the interests of the peoples of the five countries — the Greater Maghreb. Such integration should contribute in an effective and innovative manner to the present dynamic in the Arab world. The Arab Maghreb should actively contribute to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, in particular in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean, and to development and stability in the Sahelo-Saharan region. It should be in the position to overcome terrorist threats and the related dangers of transnational organized criminal networks.

King Mohammed VI made Africa the top priority of Moroccan foreign policy in October, promoting cooperation and solidarity in order to meet political, social, economic and security challenges hampering comprehensive development in the continent. With the same commitment, Morocco has contributed positively to international and regional efforts to settle several conflicts, including through its early and ongoing participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In Africa, in particular, Morocco has actively supported transitional democratic processes in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, among others.

Convinced of the need to develop and strengthen a common coordination and negotiation mechanism among African countries, Morocco has worked in cooperation with its African brothers to launch the Ministerial Conference of African Atlantic States with the aim of optimizing cooperation opportunities under that common mechanism to overcome common challenges, in particular those related to security and environment.

There is no doubt that achieving the goal of sustainable development in developing countries, particularly in Africa, remains a daunting challenge, given the persistent gap between international development assistance and the heavy debt burden of developing nations. In that context, we support the small and island countries of the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific and Indian Oceans in their efforts under the Mauritius Strategy.

With that clear vision and constructive approaches reflecting the balance between domestic and foreign policy priorities, the Kingdom of Morocco calls on the States members of the General Assembly to support its candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the biennium 2012-2013, in accordance with the rotation principle of the African Group. That bid reflects Morocco's aspirations to serve peace and stability, strengthen solidarity and uphold universal ideals. Above all, it serves the goal of maintaining international peace and security as a clear constitutional commitment of the Kingdom. It enshrines our more than 50 years of pioneering experience, during which more than 50,000 Moroccan peacekeepers have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide.

In that context, Morocco is participating actively in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, which is an effective instrument to promote international solidarity with countries emerging from conflict and those starting a peacebuilding and national reconciliation process. In that spirit and to strengthen its partners for peace, Morocco is deeply and transparently committed to implementing its international obligations on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Its candidacy will support enhanced solidarity among developing countries through South-South cooperation and the creation of mechanisms based on a new vision that will include humanitarian assistance to confront natural disasters and the food crisis, particularly in sub-Saharan African countries, as well as the Caribbean and Pacific island States. Financial and technical assistance will be provided to the economic and social sectors, including agriculture, health care, water and electricity. We currently host more than 9,000 students from 42 countries, among whom 8,000 have been granted Moroccan scholarships.

Finally, Morocco's candidacy represents the promotion of universal values. Thanks to its diversity and openness, the Kingdom of Morocco has always served as a crossroads of civilizations — a land of peace, tolerance and coexistence among cultures and religions. Moreover, given its true commitment to the universal values of human rights, the Kingdom has taken several initiatives aimed at strengthening the culture of human rights. It also played a an important part in establishing the Human Rights Council review mechanisms, given its leading role in that United Nations body.

We are truly confident that the support of the members of the Assembly for the Moroccan candidacy, which represents a specific regional context, will provide the Kingdom, during its mandate in the Security Council, with the distinct opportunity to address, in a constructive and balanced manner, the sensitive matters on the Council's agenda involving Arab and African issues.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Guido Westerwelle, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Westerwelle (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): Seldom has people's yearning for freedom, dignity and self-determination played such a dominant role as it has this year. Until now, we have experienced globalization

first and foremost through the ever-greater integration of the world economy. Today, we see that globalization means so much more; that it has also brought about a globalization of values. Those are the values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the inalienable rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In North Africa and in the Arab world, millions of people have shaken off the shackles of decades of oppression. They want freedom, democracy and human rights, as well as better lives for themselves and their families. That road is anything but easy. A new political system must mature in order to become stable. That takes time and patience. However, even the longest road begins with the very first step. This is a year of momentous steps.

We have not forgotten the moving images of people who won dignity and self-respect by their own efforts, the proud faces on Bourguiba Boulevard in Tunis and in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Those people want to shape their own future, and their yearning is by no means limited to the Arab world. In Belarus, too, people long for an end to repression and tyranny and for the opportunity to fully develop their individual personalities.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification more than 20 years ago, Germany experienced for itself the joy of a peaceful revolution. Today we have a fundamental interest in the success of the political awakening in the southern Mediterranean region. We Germans offer our support for the reforms in Morocco and Jordan, the political awakening in Egypt and Tunisia, and the fresh start in Libya following the overthrow of the dictator.

Every country and every society will find its own way into the modern world, either through revolution or through reform. We want to provide advice and support. We want to help create an independent judiciary, a pluralistic media landscape, and a vibrant civil society. We want to help people come to terms with their past and we want to support the constitutional process. Above all, however, we want to assist in the crucial process of building a new social and economic order, for we all know that the success of social change largely hinges on economic success. People who take to the streets for freedom and self-determination must see first-hand that they, too, can succeed with the help of their ideas, their creativity and their commitment.

Germany is therefore working not only for close partnerships but for increased market access. We want to foster change through increased trade. We are offering investments, especially in the small and medium-sized enterprises that form the backbone of an open and successful society. Most important of all, however, will be to offer young people education and training so that they can make the most of their opportunities. That is of key importance to successful transitions and fresh starts in those countries.

The courageous men and women of Syria deserve a clear sign of our solidarity. The Syrian Government has responded to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people with brutal force. Germany will continue to press for a Security Council resolution. This is not only about showing solidarity with the Syrian people; it is also about the credibility of the international community. If the repression continues, we Europeans will further tighten sanctions against the regime. The Syrian people should be free to shape their own future.

This week has been dominated by the unresolved conflict in the Middle East. On Friday here in New York, President Abbas expressed the Palestinians' expectations and understandable frustration with the lack of progress made (see A/66/PV.19). On the same day, Prime Minister Netanyahu reaffirmed Israel's justified desire to exist in peace within secure borders (see A/66/PV.19). Both sides have legitimate interests. However, these interests are certainly not irreconcilable. They can be overcome if the parties involved are willing to do so.

Germany is backing a two-State solution. We support a Palestinian State that will allow the Palestinians to live in dignity and self-determination and that is independent, sovereign, contiguous and democratic, as well as politically and economically viable. Over the past few years, we have been heavily involved in the practical development of this statehood by helping to build an administration, infrastructure and vocational training, as well as politically, in the German-Palestinian Steering Committee. And we do not want that State to be founded sometime in the distant and indeterminate future.

Let there be no doubt, however, that the security of Israel is and will continue to be part of the raison d'être of the Federal Republic of Germany. Peace

between Israelis and Palestinians is possible. A Palestinian State is possible. Two States existing peacefully side by side are possible. However, they can be achieved only through negotiations. The statement issued by the Middle East Quartet on Friday identified the milestones along the way. Germany worked hard for that Quartet statement and staunchly supports it.

The confrontation of words here in New York must not be allowed to lead to an escalation in violence in the Middle East. I therefore call on both sides, Palestinians and Israelis, to enter into direct negotiations without delay. On Friday, the two sides reaffirmed their desire for a negotiated peace. The task now is to channel the energy and pressure of recent days into a constructive process. The two sides have been called on to come forward within three months with comprehensive proposals on territory and security, and to refrain from all provocative actions. The international community will continue to support the difficult road to peace. This includes the Moscow conference as part of the negotiating timetable for the coming months.

I would like to express my appreciation to all who have worked so hard in the past few days to create this opportunity for a constructive solution. As a European, I would like to extend my special thanks to the European Union's High Representative, Lady Ashton. Let us make use of the impetus provided by the intensive efforts here in New York for the benefit of the people of Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The international community has worked tirelessly for years to ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour a threat to international peace and security. Many, indeed too many people have already lost their lives as a result of that threat. On 5 December in Bonn, under Afghanistan's chairmanship, we will discuss the way forward. The Conference will focus on three major issues. The first is the complete handover of responsibility for security. This summer saw the start of a process whereby the Afghans are to gradually assume responsibility for security in their country by 2014. This is a responsible handover of responsibility.

Secondly, the international community will remain engaged in Afghanistan after 2014. Afghanistan will continue to need economic initiatives and more regional cooperation to help strengthen its sovereignty. The New Silk Road initiative, which we launched here in New York last week, is intended to serve this aim.

Thirdly, Afghanistan's internal reconciliation and support from States in the region are critical to lasting peace. The brutal murder of former President Rabbani shows that the reconciliation process will continue to suffer setbacks. Nevertheless, it must and will go on. Germany will play its part on the road to Bonn.

While people are seizing the opportunity to build a better future for themselves in freedom and self-determination in a growing number of countries around the world, millions in the Horn of Africa are struggling to survive. The United Nations has played a valuable role in providing swift humanitarian assistance. Germany is doing everything in its power in this and many other crises to alleviate the suffering.

The collapse of State authority and the impact of climate change are aggravating the already disastrous situation. Germany will continue to be in the vanguard of the fight against climate change. As with disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as the protection of human rights, the fight against climate change is an integral element of preventive diplomacy. It is part of a farsighted peace policy.

By the end of this year, our planet will have more than 7 billion inhabitants. In that world, Germany will place its hopes in a strong United Nations as a forum for political consensus-building, a source of rules with international legitimacy, and a player in the crisis regions of this world. The United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights offer more people than ever before the direction and inspiration they need to strive for a cooperative world order and a fairer global community.

However, the United Nations has to adapt to our changing world. Only then will the decisions made here gain political force, effectiveness and acceptance. New centres of power are emerging in global politics. Their economic dynamism has prompted them to demand political participation. The sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly considered United Nations reform, but no real progress has been achieved so far. We welcome the fact that the new President intends to again personally champion this reform. We will do everything we can to him.

In September 38 years ago, two German States were admitted to the United Nations. At that time, my predecessor in office, Walter Scheel, stated before the Assembly:

"Where there is a question of international cooperation, of preserving peace and of protecting the rights of man, there the Federal Republic of Germany will always be found. If there is anything we have learned from our own bitter experience it is this: man is the measure of all things".

Man is the measure of all things. Germany remains committed to this principle.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are pleased to sincerely and warmly congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and to his brotherly country, Qatar, with which we share deep fraternal relations. We are confident that his diplomatic experience, especially in the field of multilateral diplomacy, will have a great impact on the success of this session. We wish also to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss of Switzerland, for his successful efforts in the conduct of the previous session. We also extend our congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the international community's renewed confidence in him, as evidenced by his re-election to his post for a second term, so that he can continue his efforts to revitalize the role of the United Nations and further develop its work.

Each year, when we address the Assembly from this rostrum, we begin by presenting the issue of the Palestinian people. The international community has worked to encourage negotiations between the Palestinian National Authority and the Government of Israel, the occupying Power. Unfortunately, the situation remains at a standstill. For that reason, the global community, and the United Nations in particular, should act to fulfil its responsibility to find a just and comprehensive solution. We believe that the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the borders of 4 June 1967 and the recognition of that State as a Member of the Organization will undoubtedly lead to serious negotiations aimed at reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Brotherly Somalia has been the victim of a decades-long civil war caused by a weak leadership that failed to reach a political consensus to end that hateful war. We believe that, to save the Somali people from the threefold threat of poverty, ignorance and famine, the time is ripe for the United Nations to intensify its efforts, in cooperation with regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, to devise a plan to bring peace to Somalia. We would also stress the importance of increasing the provision of humanitarian assistance to the millions of Somali refugees and displaced persons. We are confident that Somalia's neighbours share our belief in the need for political solutions to the chronic crisis in that country. We also reiterate to the Secretary-General that we are fully prepared to support the efforts of the United Nations in that regard.

On 26 January 2011, my country submitted its periodic report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in the context of the mechanism for the periodic review of States' reports. We in the Sultanate of Oman are satisfied that we have come a long way in terms of protecting human rights at all levels. We consider this a national and spiritual commitment aimed at achieving justice that also supports the dimension of a global culture of human rights protection.

Our contemporary world is witnessing profound changes in the demographic composition of the peoples of the world, as young people now constitute the majority of the world population. As they are the most ambitious group, capable of mapping the future, the international community should take this reality into consideration in the elaboration of all manner of plans in the economic, education and sustainable development fields.

As our region is experiencing such profound changes, we, like the rest of the world, believe that the aspirations of young people to a better and more secure world and decent livelihoods have prevailed and should be accepted and welcomed by all Governments. We in the Sultanate of Oman, in keeping with the instructions given by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, have based all of our national economic and social plans on empowering young people to make maximum use of their potential to benefit from technology and to achieve a society characterized by prosperity and sustainable growth.

Today's world is facing numerous crises that make it imperative for the international community to work jointly to create conditions that are conducive to finding solutions. The world may be on the brink of a widespread food crisis, and many people live in fear of food shortages. Efforts must therefore be made at the international level to expand production through the cultivation of larger areas and the use of advanced technology to increase yields and to combat desertification in vulnerable areas.

The continuing global financial crisis obliges us to collectively rethink the principles underlying investment and international trade in order to reach appropriate solutions aimed at reducing the negative impacts of the crisis on countries and societies, particularly in the developing world.

An additional issue we must face is that of global phenomena such as hurricanes, earthquakes and the high level of environmental pollution, all of which lead to major human and economic losses. We believe that all countries, particularly the major industrialized countries, should join together to find a solution aimed at reducing industrial and environmental pollution and greenhouse-gas emissions based on modern technology in those fields.

In closing, we are hopeful that all countries will seize the opportunity offered by the current session to take practical steps and measures on all of the issues under discussion. We hope that the session will meet with every success.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I wish him every success in his efforts to promote the interests of our international Organization. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, and express to him our gratitude and appreciation for his successful presidency of the Assembly last year.

It is only natural that I should start by addressing the current situation in Syria, our position in that regard and the circumstances and events unfolding inside and outside of our country. There is no doubt that States' positions and circumstances are governed by their geopolitical realities, related problems and demands stemming therefrom. At the same time, they are influenced by repercussions and the price they have to pay, whether high or low, resulting from positions they take in response to those issues.

The Syrian Arab Republic is located at the heart of the Middle East region. Syria's location has determined its major role in the politics and balances of the Arab world and the region in general. For many decades, Syria faced major challenges and difficulties with a firm stance against attempts to limit its role and influence and divert it from the national course it had charted. It is no secret that Syria has stood firm in support of national sovereignty and independence in its national decisions — a position that has remained a primary pillar of Syrian foreign policy.

Syria has spared no effort in support of the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people and in championing resistance movements. Syria has upheld its inalienable right to liberate the entire occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. At the same time, Syria has extended a hand of friendship to all States and established its international relations based on mutual respect and mutual interests. Through leverage, it has promoted the centrepiece of Syria's national priorities and established policies, namely on the Middle East question, in efforts to liberate the land and restore the rights of the people.

Syria was dragged into another confrontation following the occupation of Iraq. It had to choose between enduring political siege and isolation or submitting to demands. Again Syria summoned all of its might to overcome such a policy, despite the exorbitant price we had to pay at the expense of our domestic priorities and interests. We emerged stronger from that battle, having preserved our independent decisions and safeguarded our national priorities.

There are two sides to the problem that Syria faces today. On the one hand, the country needs people-driven political, economic and social reform. President Bashar Al-Assad has already declared that those reforms are needed and timely. He has expressed a strong desire to accomplish them. But the force of the political circumstances to which I briefly alluded to earlier forced internal demands — important as they were — to take a back seat to other priorities. Our

overriding priority was to address external pressures that at times were tantamount to blatant conspiracy.

On the other hand, popular demands and needs have been manipulated to further objectives alien to the interests and expressed desires of the Syrian people. Those demands have become stepping stones used by armed groups to sow discord and to sabotage our security, eventually becoming a new pretext for foreign intervention.

Syria has assumed its responsibility to protect its citizens through actions to guarantee safety and stability. It remains vigilant against the danger of foreign intervention, which takes on different forms with each passing day. Challenging that does not diminish our concern for popular demands that were already accommodated prior to the recent events. In our view, the needed reforms are those that are now due, many elements of which have been already met. They are a work in progress that will continue through national dialogue and in the context of national unity, sovereignty and independence.

To shed more light on the situation, I would recall at this juncture the statement made by President Al-Assad on 20 June. In his statement, the President announced many reform measures based on the following new laws: the political parties act to guarantee political pluralism; the information act to lay the ground for free and independent media; the parliamentary elections act and the local administration act. The proposed reform measures were to be finalized by a thorough examination and review of the Syrian Constitution. The review could eliminate certain articles to allow for political pluralism and democratic practices. It could even lead to the framing of a new Constitution that would guarantee all of these things.

The constitution is the backbone of the political, economic and social life of all States. That reform measure will definitely respond to popular demands and needs. Furthermore, the President left the door open to different views and proposals on the reform effort in general. In the televised interview that followed, the President announced that a timeline had been set to agree on and implement the proposed reforms in no more than six months. That is an extremely important position that requires a serious, in-depth national dialogue in order to achieve the desired mechanisms and results.

A comprehensive dialogue started a few weeks ago in various Syrian governorates. Representatives of various sectors of Syrian society, including opposition figures, are participating in the process to examine the comprehensive political, economic and social components of the proposed reform package.

We deeply regret the surge in foreign-inspired activities of armed groups in Syria, which have not waned and have instead continued to gain momentum. That is the other side of the coin. We would have liked for those countries that advocated the need for reform and change to have supported the official Syrian position instead of having opted for incitement and defiance. In fact, the more ground we have covered towards stability and reform, the stronger the foreign incitement has become. Armed violence has surged in tandem with multiple economic sanctions. By targeting the Syrian economy with sanctions, the United States and the European Union have jeopardized the interests and basic daily subsistence needs of the Syrian people.

This course of action cannot in any way be reconciled with pronouncements about concern for the interests, security and rights of the Syrian people. Furthermore, it runs counter to the basic principles of human rights, in defence of which those States base their interference in our internal affairs. It must be recalled that the Charter of our Organization states that "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state".

Syria provided our region with a model of peaceful coexistence among the different segments of the Syrian population, a model which deserves to be emulated. Syria opted for secularism to promote its national unity in view of the religious and ethnic diversity of the region to which it belongs, a region that is the cradle of divine religions and the birthplace of human civilization.

Any objective and realistic analysis of the events in and around Syria will demonstrate clearly that one of the purposes of the unjust anti-Syria campaign currently under way is to attack this model of coexistence, which has been a source of pride to our people. How can we otherwise explain media provocations of financing and arming religious extremism? What purpose could that serve other than total chaos, which would dismember Syria — and

consequently adversely affect its neighbours? What else could this course of action achieve other than to spread Western hegemony throughout the countries of the Mediterranean and to serve Israel's expansionist interests?

I assure the Assembly that our people are determined to reject all forms of foreign intervention in their internal affairs. We shall continue to achieve security and stability and to implement the comprehensive programme of reform through national dialogue so that, within months, Syria will become a model of political pluralism and an oasis for peaceful coexistence among the different segments of its population.

From this rostrum, I call on the States that have participated in the unjust campaign against Syria to reconsider their positions. To them I say, "Our people will not let you implement your plans and will foil your schemes".

I also express our appreciation to the countries that have stood by our people's side in this crisis, pre-empting any harm that could have befallen their interests and encouraging them to pursue their aspirations.

For many years, the international community has considered the two-State solution as the basis for establishing peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The negotiations between the two sides that have continued for years have failed to achieve any progress towards a solution owing to Israel's well-known positions and measures. Therefore, the international community's pursuit of the recognition of a Palestinian State on the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, is legitimate. It is a positive step towards restoring all Palestinian rights. Syria calls on the international community to support that request. We also condemn the Israeli blockade of Gaza and call on the international community to shoulder its responsibility and force Israel to lift the blockade.

Our position on declaring the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone is well established and well known. We continue to call for bringing pressure to bear on Israel to implement international resolutions that have called on it to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to submit its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime. This measure is of extreme importance to the security and stability of our region. At the same time, we stress that all States have the right to acquire nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. That right is guaranteed under the NPT.

We strongly renew the call to lift the embargo that has been enforced against Cuba for decades.

We all aspire to a more just and secure world. This international Organization has a major role to play in that regard. It can do so more competently if some powerful States gave up attempts to further their own agendas. Nevertheless, we still hope that the international community, through this Organization, will be able to follow the right course so as to bring about a better world, to which our peoples aspire.

The meeting rose at 2:40 p.m.